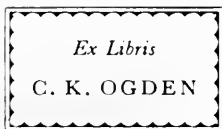




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M<sup>rs</sup>. Braithwaite Batty,

with

Her Brother's Love -

William Stebbing.

==

# SOME GREEK MASTERPIECES



**SOME GREEK MASTER-  
PIECES IN DRAMATIC  
AND BUCOLIC POETRY**

THOUGHT INTO ENGLISH VERSE *by*

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T. FISHER UNWIN LTD.  
LONDON: ADELPHI TERRACE

PA3622  
S74

*First published in 1919*

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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
ÆSCHYLUS	9
<i>Prom. Vinc.</i> , vv. 88-112. PROMETHEUS GIBBETED ON A ROCK (p. 12)	
<i>Persæ</i> , vv. 249-255 ; and 353-432. SALAMIS (p. 16)	
<i>Agam.</i> , vv. 1256-1330. CASSANDRA AT THE PALACE GATE OF MYCENÆ PROPHECYING MURDER (p. 21)	
<i>Eumen.</i> , vv. 308-396. SONG OF THE FURIES ENCIRCLING ORESTES (p. 25)	
SOPHOCLES	33
<i>Ædip. Tyr.</i> , vv. 1367-1415. ŒDIPUS VINDICATES HIS BLIND- NESS (p. 35)	
<i>Col.</i> , vv. 668-719. COLONOS (p. 39)	
<i>Antig.</i> , vv. 891-903. ANTIGONE FRONTING HER TOMB (p. 42)	
<i>Ajax</i> , vv. 545-577. AJAX AND HIS CHILD (p. 43)	
<i>Ajax</i> , vv. 815-865. AJAX TO HIS SWORD (p. 45)	
<i>Electra</i> , vv. 1126-1170. ELECTRA (p. 48)	
EURIPIDES	53
<i>Helena</i> , vv. 1301-1352. DEMETER'S SEARCH FOR PROSERPINE (p. 56)	
<i>Iphig. in Aul.</i> , vv. 1211-1249. IPHIGENIA, THE PROTESTING VICTIM (p. 61)	
<i>Iphig. in Aul.</i> , vv. 1368-1401 ; and 1434-1508. IPHIGENIA, THE TRIUMPHANT MARTYR (p. 63)	
<i>Hecub.</i> , vv. 905-952. TROY'S LAST NIGHT (p. 67)	
<i>Hecub.</i> , vv. 503-582. POLYXENA (p. 69)	
<i>Troades</i> , vv. 1156-1202. ASTYANAX CONFINED BY HECUBA IN HECTOR'S SHIELD (p. 73)	
<i>Orest.</i> , vv. 211-236 ; and 253-315. FURY-TORTURED ORESTES NURSED BY ELECTRA (p. 77)	
<i>Ion</i> , vv. 82-183. APOLLO'S FOUNDLING MINISTERING AT DELPHI (p. 82)	

EURIPIDES—*continued* :*Bacchæ*, vv. 64-162. THE BACCHANTES AT THEBES (p. 86)*Iket.*, vv. 429-455. A STATE (p. 91)*Fragm.* ENVY (p. 94)

## ARISTOPHANES . . . . . 101

*Aves*, vv. 209-223. KING HOOPOE TO THE NIGHTINGALE  
(p. 103)*Aves*, vv. 676-783. LEADER OF BIRD CHORUS (p. 104)*Equites*, vv. 551-604. HORSEMEN AND HORSES (p. 109)*Nubes*, vv. 275-290 ; and 299-313. SONG OF THE CLOUDS  
(p. 113)

## THEOCRITUS . . . . . 117

*Idyll VII (Part of)*. A MEMORY (p. 119)*Idyll XVI*. POET AND PATRON (p. 121)*Idyll XXI*. A FISHERMAN'S DREAM (p. 125)*Idyll IX*. DAPHNIS AND MENALCAS (p. 129)*Idyll XVIII*. HELEN : EPITHALAMIUM (p. 133)*Idyll XIII*. HYLAS (p. 136).*Idyll I*. DAPHNIS (p. 141).*Idyll XI*. THE CYCLOPS AND GALATEA (p. 146)*Idyll XV*. ADONIAZUSÆ (p. 151)*Idyll XXIV*. THE INFANT HERACLES (p. 161)*Idyll XXVIII*. AN IVORY DISTAFF (p. 166)

## BION AND MOSCHUS . . . . . 171

## BION—

*Idyll I*. ADONIS (p. 173)*Idyll II*. INNOCENT BOYHOOD (p. 177)*Idyll III*. LED ASTRAY (p. 179)

## MOSCHUS—

*Idyll III*. ON BION (p. 181)*Idyll I*. HUE AND CRY ! (p. 185)

## APOLLONIUS RHODIUS . . . . . 191

*Argonautica*, Book III. THE ARGONAUTS (p. 193)

## "THE SWALLOW ! THE SWALLOW !" . . . . . 203

## THE SWALLOW SONG . . . . . 204

**ÆSCHYLUS**



## ÆSCHYLUS

THE property in Æschylus which particularly impresses me is his power of concentration on a single character; even on one point. All dramatists have for each play a character about whom the rest, persons and incidents, gather, or are supposed to gather. An author of a book desires to spread the interest. Indeed, characters themselves, whether in play or volume, have an instinct for refusing to be despotically absorbed. Æschylus in his "Prometheus" insisted upon it, and succeeds. From the first verse of the Play to the last, minds, emotions are, as spectacularly they could not help being, riveted on the agonized figure on the cliff's side. Not that this is all, even the chief marvel, of the piece. Ages, worlds, of manifold passion, conflict, past, future, present—unfathomable in themselves—change and interchange, whirl round the Deity undeified, suffering pain as men suffer pain; only that none human could survive this. He has insight into decrees of Fate which mighty Zeus covets to learn, though they might show Him consigned to be mocked by His captive Titans in Tartarus.

We might imagine that Æschylus had intended to diversify the interest by representing the Giver of Fire to Earth as a martyr for Humanity, a Redeemer

of Man from the permanent status of mere head of the beasts of the field that Zeus and himself found him. Such mediation is pictured only to fascinate us the more with Prometheus. The work he does, his conflicts with Olympus serve simply to explain the stupendous Being a Thinker has elaborated, created out of his own fancy, and his discontent with the State Theology of Hellas.

The "Agamemnon" exhibits the same absorption of the Poet in one of his characters. His subject was a grand one, the return of the Conqueror. It was wrenched out of his hands by the adultery of Clytæmnestra, and her revenge for the slaughter of Iphigenia. That, too, a sufficient theme for tragedy. But the Greek General in Chief brings in his train the Prophetess Cassandra. Thenceforward the Play is hers. Little cares writer, any more than reader or spectator, for the forced connexion of Captive and Conqueror, or for any, very unlikely, affection of hers for the slayer of her family. Two women occupy the stage; but for Æschylus really there is only one. When the Prophetess is gone, the curtain might as well drop!

If there could be anything beyond the utterness with which a vision seized on Æschylus when he ranged about for a ruling Idea, it must have been at the birth in his brain of the Hymn of the Eumenides. The play is properly named after them. They make it; and the Hymn is they. How triumphantly the Three defend themselves—how grisly, hideous they remain. But by it, through it, the grip they keep on heart and brain! Is there anything in the

entire range of dramatic literature its equal? I say "dramatic"; but the "Prometheus" is an Ode, and the "Agamemnon" a string of Odes.

Yet the pen which fetched the Furies from the Gates of Hell could describe a battle, that of Salamis, as vividly as if a Napier were reporting from despatches written on the Field. We feel as we read that not an incident is related for which the Marathon soldier could not vouch the honour of his sword. Somehow, not the less, but the more, it is inspired poetry.

## PROMETHEUS GIBBETED ON A ROCK

“Hear, Air of Heav’n, that all Divine things  
breathe;

And Ye, winged Breezes, dancing ev’rywhere ;  
Hidd’n Springs that set wide Rivers flowing far ;  
Sea breaking into laughter numberless ;  
Thou, Universal Mother, kindly Earth ;  
And He, all-seeing Sun, to whom I cry—  
Am I not of You—God—as Ye are Gods ?  
Then, witness—I a God in sight of Gods,  
How suffer I, and from a fellow God !  
Fix your full gaze upon Me ! let all mark  
Each outrage that my mangled body now,  
And for a thousand years, shall, writhing, bear.  
Skilled our new Chief, as jealous Despots are,  
Planning duress and torture for a foe.  
He in such sort has me re-made, a God,  
To feel what pain in mortal flesh is like.

Ah ! Ah ! it racks my joints !—

Worse still, and more

The triumph ; He has taught me what is fear !  
I groan at a pang ; and for next I groan !  
Think Ye ’tis solace to know a term set  
To all—when the evening star shall rise ?  
Sharper the woe ; my soul sees the When and  
How !



Never can woe befall me unforeseen ;  
 My doom I read ; and that I, being I,  
 Am bound to abide it, whate'er it be,  
 As lightly as I may. Who better weighs  
 Than I the load of deaf Necessity !  
 What boots then talk of my curst fate ? Why !  
     nought !

And silence—what ? nought too ! Still, will I speak  
 To you, who love, but cannot understand  
 Why I should not have been, and done as Ye,  
 Ministers of Nature, who are content  
 To smile, and frolic, run, and bloom, and play,  
 And shine, and warm, and charm, because Ye must.

Not thus was I, Immortal like yourselves,  
 Giv'n Deity : mine not to be, but make ;  
 Hence my offence against Heav'n's King ; for that  
 I suffer ; Sovereign He ; He wields power  
 Absolute ; and by my help : yes, by mine !

Remember Ye how 'twas when Kronos reigned ?  
 An easy rule ; each doing that seemed right  
 In his own eyes ; but a gradual rift  
 Kept widening to universal wrong.  
 At last war, open war, in Heav'n itself ;  
 All Nature threatened with self-ruin—winds, streams  
 Forests, mountains, even flow'rs, even stars.  
 At length, the Anarchs crushed ; Peace, Law,  
     restored ;

Of his own will old Kronos safe withdrawn  
 To the Isles—his crown roses without thorns.

Alas ! that Zeus on His Almighty Throne  
 Was satisfied to rule, not guide, and lift.  
 Among the beasts of the field was Man ; there

Zeus left him ; saw—cared not to see—a spark,  
 Spirit Divine, within, that moved to rise  
 A God on Earth, as He in Heav'n above.  
 Not Zeus's creature Man ; Zeus loved him not ;  
 Had the Fates suffered, would have swept him off,  
 And planted one His own. Ev'n He, the King,  
 Stooped to be jealous of the worm He scorned,  
 Affected as Lord of Heav'n to be blind  
 To Deity in the germ ; as if, to see  
 Th'Immortal through the Mortal, God in Man,  
 Were not itself the proof of Deity !

Vainly I spoke my thought to Him ; He frowned,  
 And taught his young Olympians to frown.  
 I ceased to urge, but pondered how to raise.  
 Fire is the Sun's ; quickens the bolts of Zeus,  
 And feeds the furnace whence Hephæstus draws  
 The life that stirs his Statues and his Arms ;  
 'Tis a Royal privilege—

Hunting for means

To wake the soul asleep in Man, I chanced  
 On a rush prepared by the lame God, but dropped.  
 Inside smouldered the pith ; hot at my breast  
 I carried it to Earth, and fired a wood ;  
 Fit spirits thence caught flame ; and never since  
 Has that fire died ; from its fostering warmth  
 Art upon Art has blossomed into life,  
 Transforming the clod Man was ; and its light,  
 Piercing the encumbering incubus  
 Fanned the dim spark to flame :—

The whole my work !

High treason—my chief glory—to King Zeus,  
 A crime for men ! I pay the price as man !

Yet might I earn remission of my doom,  
Knelt I, with my foreknowledge, at His Throne ;  
For I read, Zeus, like Kronos, too must part,  
Though How is clouded, and I will not spy.  
Nay, why delay the Future, if I could ?  
Change is to rise ; should He Himself not joy  
That Being ever tow'rd's Perfection climbs ?  
'Twas well that in due time good Kronos fell ;  
'Tis well that Zeus, sovereign and jealous, falls ! ”

*Persæ*, vv. 249-255 ; and 353-432.

## SALAMIS

### THE BATTLE DESCRIBED TO QUEEN ATOSSA

“ Ye, thousand Cities of Asia ; Thou—  
Persia, Earth’s treasure-house, to whom they bow ;  
And Thou, August Lady—

forgive my tale !

Hear how wealth, Pow’r, have sunk in one fell gale !  
Alas ! for me to tell the hateful thing ;  
Recount disasters suffered by The King !

Our fleet was stationed off a narrow strait ;  
The Greeks within ; and Persia held one gate.  
To the mainland, where our Lord’s Army lay,  
An Athenian messenger came one day ;  
He brought a letter from—it seemed, a friend—  
In truth, an Arch Destroyer, jealous Fiend !—  
It spoke of dire panic in the Greek host :  
‘ The Confederate Admirals had lost  
All courage ; and no longer would they stay  
In the Strait, but each take his homeward way.  
Let the King be warned ; for with this would go  
His hope to end the whole war at a blow.’  
The King believed ; too generous He  
To scent Hell’s envy of prosperity.  
An order went forth that ‘ the Fleet as soon  
As night in upper air had settled down,  
Should close the Strait’s entrance round and about,  
Ajax-isle also, to bar in and out ;

On pain, if Greek found exit after all,  
That instead a head from our fleet should fall.'

Brave draft on fortune ; no forecast of ill !  
And who would dare gainsay The Great King's will ?  
Nay ; joy—save to old seamen, whose advice  
Not asked—And now to crush the cockatrice !

We closed the Strait ! Night brooding in the air,  
Twilight lingering ; scant time to prepare  
For a battle ;—first, the seafaring men,  
Having supped, to thong their oars ; Captains then,  
Sailors and swordsmen, to see to it all  
Crossed to their posts in answer to the call.  
A wakeful night throughout, before the last  
Of ships and crews had to new stations passed.

And not a hint of stir, or watch, on board  
The hostile navy, where we saw it moored,  
A mere mile off ; no sign that it recked aught  
Of engaging, by feigned attack, our thought,  
And skulking elsewhere.—

So, the Night was sped ;  
And Dawn arrayed in grey, and blue, and red,  
Harnessed her milk-white fillies—

Then, while we  
Looked, though against all likelihood, to see  
The Hellenes' disappointment, as they tried  
Our line—three hundred triremes, side by side,  
Without a gap—and next scanned the array  
For flags of truce, and Heralds on their way  
To pray for mercy—suddenly a shout  
Rang, loud, and musical as Pæan, out ;  
And echo, returned from the rocky shore  
Of Salamis, swelled chorus to a roar.

If startled we, how not ? When men have fooled  
Themselves like this, whose blood would not be cooled ?

Greeks quaking ? Preparations made to fly ?  
Nay, hailing Death, with Odes of victory !

But no pause left for us to scold our past ;—  
Scarce had the shout died down, when blared a blast,  
Trumpets sounding onset, setting, as 'twere  
On flame, Strait, and circumambient air.  
Forthwith, at a word, Greek oars rose and fell  
With regular stroke on the murmurous swell ;  
And the whole was seen of the puny fleet  
Moving in battle line our own to meet !

For the attack, their right wing led the rest—  
Strange with what nicety its ranks were dressed.—  
Each, following, kept its due interval.—  
A moment's hush ; and then, as if a call  
On Heav'n at once, and Greeks, we heard a cry,  
Vast, multitudinous, appeal on high :  
' O Sons of Hellas, will ye brook to see  
Your native soil no longer yours and free,  
The Shrines of your ancestral Gods, the Graves  
Of your Sires defiled, your wives, daughters, slaves ?  
Your choice to stand or kneel !—Never again !  
Show whether ye be driv'n cattle, or Men ! '

Think not that, when they raised their battle-cry,  
We failed to answer it, to do or die ;  
But the Fight was on ; crashing, boats on boats ;  
Half our defiance expired in our throats !

Theirs to begin ;—one, steering straight to break  
A Sidon galley with his brazen beak,  
Beat-in its tall curved poop ; another sent  
An Egyptian to the bottom with rent

Yawning right in the gilded prow ;—and yet  
Fortune was fairly ev'n while the fleets met  
In the open. By degrees the attack  
Pressed our medley of galleys back and back ;  
Until, far from neighbours assisting, each  
Had to labour not with sharp prow to breach  
Swaying comrade, or, lurching, by mere bulk  
Sweep off a bench of oars, and leave a hulk.

They knew their work ; prison the seething mass,  
And chase wild stragglers who might strive to  
pass.

Fast the pinched surface of the deep was spread  
With straggling keels upturned, and dyed blood red ;  
At eve the victor crews off Ajax-isle  
Slew in The King's sight our noblest, now cheap and  
vile.

Such ships as beaks, Greek, Persian, failed to  
smite,  
Flung hither, thither, in disordered flight,  
Yet after risks many, much wandering,  
Held out, to reach a port, and serve The King.  
But alas ! for the slain, though less for those  
Whom Death in battle-shock saved from our foes,  
Than for theirs who survived to swim the Strait,  
And pray quarter from unquenchable hate.  
Wild orgy there of massacre and gore !  
As with a shoal of tunnies on the shore,  
Or fish bursting the net, the victors hewed  
And hacked their prey with splinters of drift-wood.  
Wind and Ocean hushed, borrowing from Death  
The wailing and moaning to be their voice and  
breath !

Pity us too ! who watched the agony,  
Till Night saw ; drew within her sanctuary  
A shattered salvage !—

Great Queen, I have done !  
But if ten days were counted, one by one,  
'Ere the horrors I viewed were all rehearsed,  
The tale would crave more,—broke not this heart  
first !

Be sure no single day since the Sun's birth  
Has seen like carnage revelling on Earth ! ”



*Agam., vv. 1256-1330.*

CASSANDRA AT THE PALACE GATE OF  
MYCENÆ PROPHESYING MURDER

“ The Fire ! The Fire ! It lights on me again !  
Mercy ! Forgive ! Off ! Off ! It scorches breast and  
brain !

Must I ?

I must ! Old men, ye deem I rave ?  
But I see, see ! Believe me once !

Burst in, and save !—

Perjured lioness—wolf-mated—two in one !  
The dagger !

Are ye blind ?—The slaying is begun.  
Will one heart’s blood suffice ? She thirsts for  
gore ;  
She crowns the cup—with mine !—

’Tis done—I see no more.

At last I am free ; lie there in the dust  
Priestess’s wand and necklace, for who will and  
must.

Happier the real crazed vagrant’s lot  
That scoffers called mine, than truth-telling hearkened  
not.

Vengeful God, I thank thee, bane of my life,  
That thou hast trapped me here under the butcher’s  
knife.—

Ah ! boasted I was free ?

No, a thrall still—  
A bond-slave still to work Apollo's spiteful will;  
To warn, and be mocked.

Look! the slaughter-bath;  
With a Fiend unlocking a ten years' hoard of wrath!

"May murder riot—no blood-fine be paid?  
Is a King to die, and his ghost never be laid?

Nay; do I not in this Mycenæ hear  
A stripling, banned, an exile, by the great Gods swear  
That for each blood-drop of a father slain  
Adulteress and Adulterer shall shed twain?

Prophesy I vain things? I but descry  
The future in the past, and you have thought I lie.

Troy sank in flames; and was it not the meed  
For a people glorying in a robber's deed?

And if its victors perish, do not they  
As just a vengeance for impious fury pay?

And what am I, that I murmur at Fate!  
An atom, crushed under the wheels of a wife's hate!

Ye Furies, warders of the gates of Hell,  
Grant me but one last pray'r; and then, grey Life,  
farewell!

I would lie decently, when I am dead.—  
Not I fight Destiny; I was royally bred.

"Why enter if I see 'tis death?" you say.  
What gain in lengthening life by hours, when my  
day

Is come? And ill would it befit my race  
To skulk away from death, not meet it face to  
face.

For happy minutes have each its sweet taste;  
Years to Priam's daughter are one desolate waste.—

“ But horror !

These foul odours that assault  
My nostrils, as from fresh-opened ancestral vault  
To receive new corpses !

‘ Scent from the feast  
Preparing to regale the victor lord and guest  
Beside his household altars ’ ?

Nay, a flood,  
As, when red Murder stalks abroad, of kindred  
blood !—

Yet—I am strong again—I go within,  
For I have a double part to play—

Hark ! begin

Two death-agonies ; and sole Mourner I,  
Though also ’tis with Agamemnon mine to die.—

Enough of life for me ; death cannot scare  
Me, like a bird, suspecting in each bush a snare.

Only, when a Woman and Man atone  
Hereafter for what in this house shall have been done,  
Stranger-friends, forget not that I died brave ;—  
This the last favour that of you I, dying, crave.

“ So much for Earth and Life.

And now for Death !

Hear, Sun, the dirge I chant with my expiring breath,  
While my eyes drink their last of thy blest light !  
Watch, for Thou watchest all, that these butchers  
requite

The unbefriended Thrall, their easy prey,  
For the doom she shares in blood-orgies of to-day !—

Though what am I ? Dust, fallen when Troy fell ;  
Scarce reckoned in spoil the Conqueror brought to  
swell

His triumph !

But He !

Black the sky ; and grim  
Fortune's changed countenance ; how now she  
scowls at Him !

At the flash of a falchion flit away  
A Crown, a Warrior's wreath, Imperial sway !  
All shadows, like his Troy !

I to complain  
That a Murderess snaps for me a captive's chain !—  
“ Ha ! See not you there your King bleeding lie ?—  
I come ! I come !

I cannot Save ; but I can Die ! ”

SONG OF THE FURIES ENCIRCLING  
ORESTES

“ Sisters, join hands for the dance, We who are  
One and are Three ;  
For our measure Three are enough ; no tender lyre  
need We.  
The Muse cares not for charm who inspires our chorus  
and hymn ;  
And mortals gladly would shun what to them is  
ugly and grim.  
But they shall see, and shall hear the rule by which  
We divide  
Their lots ; for, although black our home, We have  
nothing to hide.  
Let them shrink from Us, and abhor ; but respect  
Us they must ;  
For our pride and our pleasure are to be upright  
and just.  
Are any of clean heart and hands, with no sin to  
conceal ;  
They may pass, and in peace ; it is not with such  
that We deal.  
But death, and its agony—appeals of souls being  
torn  
From sun and life by their kinsfolk—half-ghosts,  
helpless, forlorn—

We minister to them ; straight we rise to Earth at  
their cry ;  
Register foul play, ev'ry charge that they bring as  
they die.  
Though the murderer breast mountain torrent or the  
sea-flood,  
We follow, like sleuth-hounds, the eternal scent of  
the blood ;  
Never halt till We have dragged him face to face  
with his guilt,  
And plunged his soul, stripped and naked, in the  
gore he has spilt

“ Night ! Night ! our mother, who conceivedst Us,  
Thou in Thy womb,  
On Earth, and after in Hell, to execute righteous  
doom,  
Hear how the Son of Latona now has dared to out-  
stretch  
His insolent arms ; snatch from our grasp this  
cowering wretch,  
Banished by Us from his home, hunted by Us from  
his kind—  
This suppliant for death, which, as pleases Us, he  
shall find—  
This pretender to a balance of crimes, forsooth, to  
set one,  
Wife's murder of husband, against a mother's by  
her son—  
This boaster of piety, matricide, venting his ire  
On robbers of his heritage, not slayers of his  
sire—

This chastiser of treason, as if our arm were grown  
short

Against traitress and traitor, and had wanted his  
support !

“ Dance, Sisters, dance ; our unlovely feet

Narrow the mystic circle we beat ;

Th’Accurst cannot resist as We sing ;—

See ! he is stepping within the ring !

Passionless and chill our fateful strain

Fans furnace-fire in the murderer’s brain.

High though his impious head he hold,

It shames base metal he prized as gold,

Ravels the toils in which he is caught,

Dazes, amazes, drives astray and distraught,

Is palsy to his soul, a pest-laden wind from the past,

To one torturing, blighting idea ties his whole being  
fast,

Prisons him in a dungeon of himself, rattling an  
endless chain,

Withered, a live-ghost, into nothingness, except for  
the pain !

“ Does the stripling God in insulting Us know he  
defies

Not Us the Three weird sisters that he affects to  
despise ?

He fights a force nor Heaven nor Man may hope  
to abate—

Which turns not aside, nor falters—irresistible Fate !

Fate spun Us into existence ; like her, doggedly We,

Born vassals, study her will, and accomplish her decree.

Best of all, do We loyally her behests, when, as here,

We set our wits, in a tangle of cross murders, to clear

Subtle confusions of motive, and a babel of tongues,  
Feigning, all of them, commissions to correct public  
wrongs.

We keep in obstinate nostrils distinct each sev'ral  
scent,

Till, troubling Ourselves with no sophisms, We cast,  
mauled and rent,

A carcase of soul to the Underworld, not even there  
Freer after all than in life while breathing upper air !

This the lot we were born to, as born were the  
Gods to theirs ;

Fate gave Us no bright raiment ; We to poor things  
were made heirs :

Strange heritage ours, the reek of some rank butcherly  
strife,

When nearest who should be dearest are spoiled of  
home and life ;

Blood, freshly dripping, We love ; by it the Slayer  
to track ;

Blot him out of existence, though with a host at  
his back.

Look, with long strides he comes in virtue of strength  
and of birth,

And pride—his !—of being the champion of Right  
upon Earth ;

We crouch, like leopard on bough, leap from above ;  
and there low,

Fallen and crushed, a mangled mass, by heavy-  
footed blow,

Lies he, sensible only that o'er him broods something  
worse

Than horrors of the present—an intolerable Curse



One business ours, to punish ; the only wages We  
ask,  
To be free to warn off even Gods, while We do our  
task !  
With our work our ways have We ; no appeals lie  
from our Court ;  
Barren any prayers to outside Powers for support ;  
Alone We work at our toil ; no fellowship seek in  
care ;  
So, when We sit and feast, We invite not others  
to share.  
We do as We are done by ; ask your Olympian Zeus  
When He has bid to His board guests gore-bedraggled  
like Us !  
Men trust in human glory ! how immutable it seems,  
As in the noonday radiance the golden Palace gleams !  
We steal from where We dwell  
Black-robed in our drear cell ;  
Round the splendour, the awe  
Of the grand show We draw  
Our magic ring ; a blight  
Blots out the gay sunlight ;  
And as our jealous feet  
Their dull sad cadence beat,  
From within the tracing of the ominous round,  
Returns the golden emanation underground ;  
And in a mist which makes a funereal dome,  
A pall to canopy the desolated home,  
Groaning incoherent tales, a maniac,  
Unknowing himself contriver of the rack,  
Staggers beneath the shadow of his own sin,  
Wondering what he is, and what he has been

“ Steadfast our purpose, fulfilling itself in many  
    modes ;  
But the goal always is one, however diverse the  
    roads.  
Our memories store ill deeds, as misers hoard up  
    their gold ;  
And mortals love Us not, for We are pitiless and cold.  
In garbage We grope, and drag rottenness into the  
    light ;  
Kindness and joyance for Gods ; We are children  
    of night and blight.  
If We light a torch, 'tis to cheat our prey stumbling  
    in front ;  
We need no such flickering to guide our feet in  
    the hunt.  
Tremble, Mortals, hearing the ordinance that the  
    Fates framed,  
Heaven, receiving, could not but sign, and We have  
    proclaimed,—  
' That, though blood kinsmen have shed may seem  
    awhile to be dumb,  
By commission to Us it shall rise, and plead from  
    the tomb.'  
In the Sunless Land is our post ; there our vigils  
    We keep,  
Till Time is ripe for a Ghost to haunt the Murderer's  
    sleep.  
Thankless our work ; and We know it. Mortals,  
    loathe, as ye will !  
We, with our whip of serpents, shall glory in  
    scourging Ill ! ”

# **SOPHOCLES**



## SOPHOCLES

No two writers, each great, of plays are more unlike in the action of them than Æschylus and Sophocles. Sophocles, like Æschylus, was a poet of high genius. In drama he was first of all a dramatist. He accepted, took, or made a story, framed it play-wise; then put its characters, with the vitality he had inspired, on the stage. In relation to them, their activity there, he is nothing but playwright. It may be objected that this is mere word-trickery; it is the same mind in a different capacity; the author shuffles the pieces as he pleases. With a thorough artist this is not true. As a playwright he ought not; therefore he cannot. The Chorus is outside the rule. He may lead that in praise of his own dear Colonus; even exalt the dominion of Aphrodite and her child Eros. Elsewhere he is on honour not to interfere with the laws of the being he had bestowed.

The result is a statuesque certainty of effect. One scene in the "Œdipus Tyrannus" is supreme. The downfallen, blind prince describes to Theban townsmen the fatal encounter with his father Laius, at the Three Ways, with none left for witness but a gurgling brook. Simple the means, overpowering the impression! Every line, though the reader, the spectator, knows the whole tragedy, compels a pause before he allows himself to recognize his knowledge. The Dramatist never loses control of his own emotions. A stillness, serenity almost, infuses itself

into catastrophes the most volcanic. Eternal calm broods over the victim of Fate. Modern students hang, as would the thousands of rapt Athenians, not on the lines of the Poet, but on the sightless outlaw, during the awful moments when he defends his self-effacement from all human society !

Throughout the dramatic remains, and in all surviving allusions to the much of which we deplore the loss, Sophocles shows the same abnegation of self. Characters in his plays live their own lives in essentials. We have only to recollect the Antigone of the " Ædipus in Colonus " to be sure how she would treat the edict of Creon. The descent into the tomb and end there were the inevitable dramatic triumph of a heroine over a tyrant. It is the same with the " Ajax." For the dramatist the Ajax was Homer's champion of Hellas, no casual victim of a fit of madness, in sheep's shambles. Fallen, the mighty fighter, as of necessity in a wrestle of muscles with brains, has to die, but dies grandly.

The moderation, the evenness, the self-restraint, of the Poet as Dramatist, after some twenty-five centuries, make themselves still felt. Wielded, hurled, by the fancy of Æschylus, the passion, the wrath, the combative philosophy of " Prometheus," the vindictiveness, as scorching as cold-blooded, of the Furies, cleave their way irresistibly, are audible whatever the tongue. Scholarship helplessly suspects, even hopes, that a proper appreciation of Sophocles, and of his delicate dramatic conscience, has suffered through the impossibility of representing the mellowed harmony of Attic diction through the medium of downright English.

ŒDIPUS VINDICATES HIS BLINDNESS

“ Surprise

That I massacred my innocent eyes ! ”  
If I must punish myself, wonder why  
I took not one step further—“ dared to die ? ”  
That your wisdom !—

My folly to repair  
To counsellors who have ne’er felt despair,  
And think to undo life can undo one  
Of the wrongs that life in the past has done !  
I join the Dead ! It is the Dead I fear ;  
And if I go to Hades, they are there.  
For me ’tis unimaginable how  
I—gallows-bird—could in the world below  
Bear to lift seeing eyes upon the twain,  
Slain by these hands, one of them worse than slain.

“ At least the children ? no joy in their bloom ? ”  
My Children ! Curses ; balefullest the doom  
Of sight, while mine, to trace signs o’er them spread  
Of those whence I too sprang—one incestuous bed !

Well, you pass on to what sight else could give  
Solace to the wofullest man alive—

“ This city where we dwell, its halls and tow’rs,  
The Shrines and statues of its guardian Pow’rs ”—  
Remember you not how, when Heaven’s hand  
Hurled its thunderbolt—plague—upon our land

For canker of crime hidden, I, on fire  
 To minister to the Gods' righteous ire,  
 Filled to o'erflow the secret traitor's cup,  
 Heedless whose doom it was to drink it up ;  
 How, of all Thebans, I devised a trap  
 With subtlest craft no caitiff might escape ;  
 Stamping in characters for all to read  
 One, defiling the land, of native breed—  
 False scion of Laius—as in near view,  
 For wrath of Me and Justice to pursue—  
 Reprobate, banned by Me from hearth and home,  
 Kithless, godless, companionless, to roam—  
 When, lo ! the brand burning for brow unknown  
 Blazed—" Impure," " Parricide," upon my own !

And you hold this unclean leper to blame  
 For sparing lawful citizens the shame  
 Of his gaze at them—still you feel surprise  
 He has forgone the joys ! of open eyes.

Blind :—and, so far, in safety from the sting  
 Of nature shrinking from a hateful Thing.  
 Would I as quick a barricade could find  
 For a second door to loathing by mankind :  
 Never hear I footsteps but I prepare  
 For whisperings, mutterings, in the air—  
 Disgust—or pity, worse !

Oh for relief  
 From contact with men—if both Blind and Deaf !  
 To live sheer Thought ! I can think as I will ;  
 And I should will Thought ne'er to brood on Ill.

Will Thought ? And I !—

E'en now what haunts my brain ?  
 'Tis Thou, black Kithæron ! Why not have slain



Straight the babe given Thee, and made its grave  
In some sour dell, or wolf-infested cave,  
Thus stifling in the germ me, and disgrace  
I was condemned to cast upon my race?

How bear I, or forbear, to leap in Thought  
To Polybus, and home that I was taught  
By him to boast my own, with all the care  
Befitting a King's child, and Corinth's heir;  
And meanwhile I was wont to tread the earth  
In all Youth's insolence and pride of birth;  
Dupe of fond tale that wooed me to adore  
For life's bloom what veiled a festering sore!  
A nameless foundling I, of parents born  
Who to wild beasts had tossed a babe forlorn!

And, next, what see I, sightless?

Three roads meet;—  
Briars narrow the space for jostling feet  
Of men and horses.

Stone deaf, I should hear  
That old man's "orders," and that young man's  
jeer;—

Now, swords clashing; now, stillness, as of death—  
Save a hidden brook murmuring beneath  
Soil gore-red—a father's—by a son shed!

So, I left Lord, Charioteer, stark dead,  
Drift I on Hell's trail. Invisible then,  
Though, Cross Roads, not to you, the blood of men  
Ye had drunk;—why not have warned?—for ye  
knew

What having done I was cursed by Fate to do!

Nuptials begetting nuptials! Rabble rout;  
Sires, brothers, children, mothers, wives, in and out!

Mass all adulteries since Earth began ;  
Match this kennel of foulness if you can !

But enough ! ev'n to tell of it must shame,  
As to do shamed nature !—

In Heaven's name,  
Hasten ; and put me anywhere, away ;  
Stab me, if you will ; or throw, a sea-stray,  
From a cliff ;—so that never I again  
Be seen of mortal eyes !

For pity, deign  
To touch a poor wretch !

You will catch no ache  
Through my disease ; 'tis one none but myself can  
take !

## COLONOS

### THE WELCOME TO ÆDIPUS

Stranger, old, and bent, and blind,  
Thy guide—or Heaven, or Chance—was kind  
In leading Thee with gracious hand  
To the crown of all our happy land.  
Listen, how in this gleaming dale  
Sings Thy welcome the nightingale—  
Now clear, now soft the warbling from the shade,  
The pale green twilight of the woodland glade.  
The full notes rise and fall,  
Tenderest madrigal,  
From the tangle of dark ivy,  
And the many-fruited greenery,  
Which neither suns of July can parch,  
Nor dust-storms scatter and toss in March.  
A wild-garden this of ours,  
Of flowers upon flowers,  
Crocuses each a gold-ray,  
And, aye dew-fed day by day,  
The Narcissus in fair clusters blooming by its side,  
Unforgetting how long since it had been its pride  
In Sicilian Enna's meadow to entwine  
Wreaths for Demeter and beauteous Proserpine.  
Hark! how threading rocks, leaping hills,  
Carol multitudinous rills,

Sleepless through the listening night,  
Chattering, flashing in sunlight,  
With broods of quickening showers  
Ministering to spring flowers ;  
Till, one on another, as in frolic and play,  
Vaulting and bounding, each pursuing its own way,  
All join Cephissus, where plunging from its high crest  
It heaps the laughing harvests on the plain's wide  
breast.

Haunt of Gods, this spot whither, stranger, Thou  
art come ;  
And we with gladness hail their visits to our home.  
Often 'tis Bacchus, by torchlight,  
Through forest, over pathless height,  
To drum-beat leading his glad band,  
Nymphs, his adorers, through our land.  
Nor are the Muses absent, dancing, and with song,  
Or Aphrodite driving her chariot along.

But chiefly are we bound our hands and hearts  
to raise  
Wise Pallas, unto Thee, in gratitude and praise.  
Take Asia ; take the riches of the Isle—Almost—  
Of which the Dorian race and House of Pelops  
boast—

Match the life-giving tree,  
That came to Us from Thee,  
Tree of the grey-blue shade,  
From Thee, grey-blue-eyed Maid !  
Tree at which the array  
Of swords shudders away ;  
And cries for axe and fire  
Sink dumb at Heaven's ire ;

For behold ! Zeus's All-seeing, Fate-boding eyes,  
And Thine, warning Havoc from the olive that  
both prize !

And hardly less, Saturn's Son, Monarch of the  
Sea,

Should All of Athens render homage unto Thee !  
Of earthly gifts can higher be than when a State  
Owns studs that devour the ground, and citizens  
great

In sea-skill, and horsemanship, fearless in all gales ;  
As lords of bit and bridle, so of oars and sails ?

Long had we watched Thee driving over the salt  
deep

The coursers Thy own hands harnessed, and taught  
to leap

At the touch of thong and rein,  
O'er the highways of Thy main ;

Till we drew from off the mead

Many a wondering steed,

And had trained all to submit

Their wild wills to curb and bit.

Then again when lifting Thy head above the waves,  
From where Thou keepest Court in gilded palace  
caves,

O'er Ocean's self Thou bad'st us follow, we were  
fain

To obey, and attend in thy Nereids' train ;

So, we broke your own chargers, billows, to our  
oars ;

And race, Poseidon, on thy pavements, linking  
shores to shores !

ANTIGONE FRONTING HER TOMB

“ O Cavern grim, my dwelling-place below,  
Jailer of this poor flesh, seal of its woe,  
Thou canst not lock me long in thy dour vault,  
The only bridal chamber I shall know.

Death ! Thou’rt no stranger to the kings from whom  
I count descent ; of a royal line I come.

Hast thou not garnered all their noblest, best ?  
Unkind thou’rt called—not to me, bound for home !

Few have my days on earth been ; and all sore  
Stained my young memories with care—the more

Black for a mother’s griefs, and, Sire, for thine—  
Both tenfold dearer for each pang you bore.

And dearer you for yours, my brethren twain,  
Clasped in whose arms I will forget the pain

Of life, and you your hate drowned in my love—  
Two rancours healed, doubling a sister’s gain.

For one I die ; for both in that lone cell  
I live in love—Brothers—you know it well—

For you, the Womb that bare, Sire that begot—  
Love, without which Heav’n’s self for me were Hell ! ”

## AJAX AND HIS CHILD

“ Bring my Child ; he will not be scared ; or fear  
For signs of butchery and bloodshed here.  
Let him break himself now to my rough way ;  
Mould his nature on mine with no delay.  
I would, Boy, that Thou mightest grow to be,  
Save Fortune’s chances, my facsimile.  
Babble tricksters, backbiters, as they will ;  
With Lords of my type Greece would not fare ill !

Yet, as I am, and as Thou art, I know  
Thy case is happier than mine is now.  
Thou smilest ; for Thee I am the world’s whole ;  
And I ! Thou seest not how bleeds my soul  
Through self-inflicted wounds !—

O for release  
From recollection—for all Thought to cease !

Use thy privilege just to Be ; Thou’lt learn  
Full soon what ’tis to joy, and what to mourn.  
Then shall thy Father’s foes be made to heed  
What sort Thou art, quality of thy breed !  
Charm thy Mother meantime ; tender, and gay,  
Drink-in the light airs, frolicsome as they.  
Dread not Achæan affronts ; none will dare  
To gibe, though I shall be no longer there ;  
Such Teucer, Warder, Shepherd, brave, wise, kind,  
Worth aught of all on earth I leave behind.

Tireless, in loving care, e'en now he goes  
Beating coverts afar for ambushed foes.

And you, Men, let him hear my charge and will—  
And be it yours to aid him to fulfil—  
Yours, Spearmen, and Yours, Soldiers of the Sea—  
By fealty to Telamon and Me—  
That Ye take my Parents this boy, whom I  
Send Them to remember dead Ajax by :—  
My gift, my Babe, to nurse till he become  
Champion of their old age, and of our home !

But watch that no Achæan Chiefs intrude,  
And steal my arms—dyed often with my blood  
For their ungrateful, lying sakes—to shame  
My dust, as prize in a funeral game,  
For some false friend to boast ; perchance, that knave,  
Whose trickeries condemn Me to my grave !

The rest—be cinders with this body made ;  
Below to clothe me—Me a Shade—with Shade.  
Only, my Shield, whose name Thou bear'st, my  
Child—

Be it kept for Thee, till Thou art grown skilled  
In ev'ry knightly exercise—then, while  
Thou wieldest it in battle for thy Isle  
By its ring richly wrought, and feel'st the fierce  
Spear-shocks on the tough orb they cannot pierce,  
Think how thy Father loved a hard-fought field,  
And to dream of Thee behind his seven-fold Shield ! ”



AJAX TO HIS SWORD

“Stand there, good Sword ; be firm, and do thy work.

Had I leisure, hadst thou, to play with words—  
The wit, the heart—well might we reason out  
Right for that we have on hand :—first, gift thou  
Hector’s—hateful to Me all foreign blood,  
His most, and, among foes of Greece, he most ;—  
Next, the mould wherewith I have girt thee round,  
Trojan earth which loathes Greek feet treading it,  
And thirsts e’en now to drink up my heart’s  
blood ;—

Lastly, for that thou art a trusty blade,  
Which chooses for its Lord, whoe’er he be,  
Death in workmanlike way, if die he will.

This settled, well, in life ;—after ? what then ?  
Zeus—for I trace from Thee—grant this I ask—  
Little, precious—that Teucer first of all  
May learn, and draw Me off the reeking sword.  
Lest I be spied by some one of my foes,  
And cast a prey for dogs and birds to tear.  
Just that, O Zeus, I kneeling crave of Thee !  
To Thee, winged Hermes, also here I cry ;  
Guide of the Dead from Earth to Hades, come,  
Lead with friendly hands to the realms below ;

Thou shalt not wait ; I know how, by one leap  
On this brave sword, to wrench the life away,  
Without ev'n a spasm, from my gaping side !

Ay, and I summon the dread Sisters three.—  
Ye of stern virginity, keen to mark  
Wrongs of poor mortals, hasten with long stride ;  
Be Judges, Advocates, Avengers be !  
Let Me face the Atreidæ ; hear Me tell  
How they have brought my life to utter nought.  
Condemn, and snatch the caitiffs where their doom,  
As absolute, as ugly, as is mine,  
Is wrought on them by hands dear as their own,  
Their ruin's depth condignly matching mine.

Yea ; and why, righteous Furies, slack your course ?  
Spare not ! make the entire Greek host to taste  
Doom for their guilty Princes—all have sinned !

Hate ? Good such hate ! Alas ! that I am dear,  
And bring pain infinite to those I love !  
Bright Sun-God, driving Thou thy car on high,  
As Thou look'st down on my ancestral isle,  
Pluck thy gold-studded rein, to break the news  
Of my perdition, and untimely fate,  
To the Old Man, my Father, and to Her  
Who bore and suckled me. Ah ! when She hears,  
The mourning She will lead the City through !

Enough vain grieving—now to do—and quick !—  
Though, Death, one moment ! ere I come to Thee—  
Thou and I will have leisure to converse  
In plenty There, where soon we shall be mates.—  
But while I still behold Thee, Light of Day,  
I would greet Thee, and thy Charioteer,  
A last and only time—never again !

Thee also, holy soil of Salamis,  
Whereon my home, my Father's hearth, were raised ;  
And famous Athens, with its kindred race ;  
Nor forget I Troy's rivers, springs and plains ;  
For they have helped nourish Me ;

once for aye

Hearken ; let Ajax bid you all, Farewell !  
Hence wends He, a Shadow, with shadows to  
discourse ! ”

*Electra*, vv. 1126-1170.

## ELECTRA

TO THE URN SUPPOSED TO HOLD HER BROTHER'S  
ASHES

“ These scanty relics all that you return  
To a most loving Sister, heedless Urn ?  
Tenfold your size could not contain the worth  
Of the large hopes with which I sent him forth.  
Ah ! handful of charred ashes that you are,  
Who quitted me and home, poor Boy, a Star !  
Would You and Life had parted ere this hand,  
To save it, exiled You from your own land !  
Had I not stolen You and saved You then  
When our Sire fell within this murder-den,  
You might, too young for pain, have shared his  
doom,

And lain of right in your ancestral tomb !

Better thus than to have, an exile, died  
On foreign soil, far from your Sister's side ;  
By strangers tended : the dust meanly tossed  
Into a mean Urn !

Ah ! Me, to have lost  
My privilege your eyes, as if in sleep, to close,  
Your limbs to bathe, and decently compose ;  
While now ! all spent in vain that constant care  
I gave to you—sweet toil ! No dearer were  
You to your Mother ; no nurse had but Me ;  
Aught I but just your ‘ Sister ’ ceased to be.—

And all I lived for in a single day  
With you, as by a whirlwind, swept away !

Dead ? I cannot think dead, but passed from  
view ;

For ever ? If so, dead am I in You !  
Cast to the winds the pledges that You sent,  
Many, by secret ways, of your intent  
To be paid for our Father's ravished life  
By that of a lust-maddened, guilty Wife,  
Mother un-Mothered ;—

And behold ! there come,  
Instead of him I hoped to welcome home,  
Dust and a Shadow ! My dream, fond and vain,  
That I should have my Brother back again,  
Our unlucky Genius translates thus,  
With—for Body—a Shadow mocking Us !

Well may enemies laugh ! What now to fear,  
Sire, Son gone ! none but a weak girl left here !  
And why ? As, her Brother, your footsteps pressed  
Hard ways which end within this straitened chest,  
She followed. Then, why live ? An ill return  
If you leave Her companionless to mourn !  
Narrow though be your shelter, sure, you ought  
To find room, or to make—for Nought with Nought !  
On Earth We shared whate'er one chanced to have :  
Let me not long and pine outside your grave.  
Read hearts ; and wonder not I seek relief  
In death. I would die to be cured of Grief ! ”



# EURIPIDES





## EURIPIDES

To understand, and place, Euripides, we must not take Æschylus, much less Sophocles, for our dramatic measure or standard. He is sensible that he addresses his audience from a stage ; yet he binds himself by no theatrical rules, has no dramatic conscience, or etiquette. He is poet and dramatist combined, and moralist besides. Very modern in feeling otherwise, he is especially a Modern in his employment of tears. Very rarely in a Play of his is pathos wholly absent, as it is from the exuberant melody and fantastic imaginativeness of the wonderful "Bacchæ." Commonly he runs up and down the whole scale, using its powers, even weaknesses. In the grand hymn on Demeter, with more suppleness he reaches the sublimity of Pindar. Note how the Mother of the Gods bows Herself to seek, not as Goddess, as a human mother, her ravished daughter. It, not the royal pride, spiritualizes Polyxena's claim to offer herself, not as devoted by her country's foes, to the Ghost of her slain bridegroom. It purifies and sweetens the savagery of Hecuba over child-Astyanax. It connects and reconciles Iphigenia's horror at a father's immolation of an unwilling victim to Artemis with the splendour of her insistence on her right to despatch the Hellenic

Armada to the destruction of pirate Troy. Continually it is used in plays on War as a lever to lift blood and havoc to a nobler level.

Whether the occasion for its use arise or not in the course of the action is a matter of indifference to him. Iphigenia at Aulis is on the stage both in her resistance and in her renunciation. In the agony of Troy a queenly mother has the news of Polyxena's voluntary execution of her doom brought by a Herald. For the Poet, as Euripides always—drama or not—was, the distinction was immaterial. He was subject to manifold fits of inspiration which demanded an audience. The Theatre of Athens was open to him; and he availed himself of its hospitality, though often not enthusiastic. For rules he cared not, if it suited his inspiration to break them. He was a teacher; and thousands on the benches were not unwilling to be taught. Critics might tell him he prosed. Crowds, though it were so, listened, and learned. In the opinion of enough others he was a magician, and charmed those who were not of the deaf adder brood. These latter at any rate could not drive him dumb. They jested upon him; accused him of Atheism; spread malignant stories, the viler if at all true, about griefs in his domestic life; grudged the admiration he won from wise thinkers. Bravely he went on writing till death took him, at the age of seventy-four, in a species of voluntary exile at the Court of Macedonian Archelaus. He was always better valued abroad than at home. A noble Epigram attributed to Thucydides attempts to clear Athens as a City of com-

plicity in the baiting of one of its chief glories. It fails to convince.

Renown apparently did not save other illustrious dramatic careers from trouble in Ancient Athens. Æschylus had to stand trial for impiety! An attempt was made to deny Sophocles management of his affairs on the ground of senile decay! Happily the fertility of all three marvellous brains in supplying the national stage seemed to thrive the more for the poisonous pin-pricks. As little, it may be hoped, minded it the scanty concession of prizes. Euripides, in particular, for his seventy-five or ninety-two Plays was crowned only five times. Nor, apparently, were his seniors more generously rewarded. Time has been a little more liberal, in saving but seven apiece for Æschylus and Sophocles, as against, for Euripides, seventeen or eighteen, according as the "Rhesus" is included or omitted. For sheer literary merit, and as classics, I dare say, it may be thought that the proportions ought to have been shifted. But, as I remarked earlier, the work of Euripides has a winning modern flavour. Even in his disregard of literary and dramatic conventions, he is able to come closer to fellow human instincts. Put to the bitter necessity of declaring with which of the great Three we could least easily dispense, we might find Euripides the hardest to pluck out of our hearts!

DEMETER'S SEARCH FOR PROSERPINE

I

It was when this world was young,  
And no minstrel yet had sung,  
That the Mother of Gods with hurried feet  
Over mountain, meadow, moor,  
Through glens, and where rivers laugh to meet  
Ocean's deep-resounding roar,  
Rushed in a passion Divine of wrath, love, despair,  
Seeking her lovely daughter lost, carried She knew  
not where !

II

As her team of lions bore  
The lamenting Goddess o'er  
Earth courting her caresses, and her wail  
For the maid stol'n from her hand  
Pierced the clash of castanets on the gale,  
Goddesses, a virgin band,  
Wind-Nymphs, Pallas, with Gorgon's head and  
panoply,  
And Artemis, joined in the search for sweet Per-  
sephone.

III

Vain ;—and sad for playmate lost  
 In girlhood—as for bud tost  
 In May from rose-tree by a northern blast—  
 Pallas, Huntress, Nymphs wind-shod,  
 Back to their Olympian nectar passed,  
 Mourning as mourns a God ;  
 And, as they parted from Demeter, pondered when  
 She would be found among their company in Heav'n  
 again !

IV

But in Her the Mother stirred  
 Beyond the Goddess :—  
She heard  
 And bade, farewells ;—  
Then loosened from their yoke  
 Her lions ; then laid aside  
 Her wreath, her torch ; even her sceptre broke,  
 Stripping her soul of all pride,  
 Of ethereal calm that reigns above,  
 Of Immortal limits to the last agony of love !

V

No longer a Goddess She ;—  
 Nought but Mother would She be.—  
 A lonely Woman, ragged and forlorn,  
 Begging scraps that dogs had spurned,  
 Beseeching tidings of a Daughter torn  
 From her embrace ; often turned  
 Into the drear night with rude gibing from the door ;  
 Then, some clue, which broke ;—leaving Her more  
 hopeless than before !

## VI

Patient of roughness, sorrow ;  
Humbling Godhead to borrow  
Help from Man, of no more avail than Heav'n ;  
She, of Gods most innocent,  
Who, more than all, for human kind had striv'n,  
In heart and brain worn and spent  
With groping for a way out whence there was way  
none,  
On the ground down fell swooning, comfortless,  
childless, alone.

## VII

It was Ida's topmost peak,  
Where Nymphs of the mountain seek  
For strays that the call of warm blood in spring—  
Scent, violet and primrose—  
Has set on the high uplands wandering  
For joys no other flock knows.—  
There in a stony, snow-deep thicket lay She prone,  
Where, only not dead because Divine, She herself  
had thrown !

## VIII

Meanwhile nor garden nor field  
Would its herbs and flowers yield ;  
The woods no more put forth their soft green leaves  
For the crumpled-hornèd beasts ;  
Gaunt hunger stalked beneath the cities' eaves ;  
Altars missed their wonted feasts ;  
Even each dew-fed reservoir of water kept  
Its sparkling fountains closely sealed because its  
Lady wept.

## IX

Then Zeus, eager for relief  
 To the Mother's angry grief  
 Threatening famine, bade the Graces arm  
 Themselves, and the Queen of Love,  
 With all their joint artillery of charm,—  
 Though they should leave night above;—  
 And lead with them the sister Muses down to Earth;  
 So, by hymn and dance, to conjure an aching breast  
 to mirth.

## X

Forth came from Olympus they,  
 With, surpassing bright and gay,  
 Aphrodite at their head, and a troop  
 Of boys their loudest to boom  
 On the cymbals with their brassiest whoop,  
 And the Ox-skinned kettledrum;—  
 Till the Goddess started from her starved, care-  
 worn sleep,  
 In the shock of her amazement forgetting ev'n to  
 weep!

## XI

Still, as in a half trance, She  
 Listened to the melody  
 Of the Muses singing; watched the Graces  
 Intertwining in the dance,  
 And gazed with rapture on their sweet faces,  
 Now in retreat, now advance;  
 While, all through, the Cyprian Queen assumed  
 command,  
 By title of Beauty's right divine, of the whole  
 joyous band.

## XII

Ne'er had felt Demeter this  
Blissful wonder, wond'ring bliss.  
Weeping She smiled once more, and smiling wept.  
She touched a flute ; without breath  
It warbled, and Nature at one note leapt  
Into warm life out of death.—

Praise be to Music ! healer it of Earth's alarms !  
Music, that shall bring a Daughter home to a Mother's  
arms.



## IPHIGENIA, THE PROTESTING VICTIM

“ No eloquence have I at my command ;  
No music mine, and no magician's wand  
To charm. Tears my best pleas, my subtlest art,  
My only force to move a Father's heart !  
For suppliant's bough, here upon thy knee  
Just, body that my Mother bore to Thee.  
How canst Thou pull my life unripe away,  
When to young eyes the light of common day  
Is sweetest ? How condemn thy Darling's eyes  
To open on the nether world's grey skies ?  
Rememberest that I was first to call  
Thee ' Father,' and Thou Me ' Daughter,' and all  
Our mutual endearments, when, to give  
It seemed as much a joy as to receive ?  
Often would thy loving fond fancy see  
A happy bridal in the days to be,  
With Me the mistress of a lordly home  
Worthy of the lineage whence I come.  
Then, as I hung upon and clasped Thee, I,  
Reading the future in my turn would cry,  
' And in that home of mine, if Thou grow old,  
Worn with war and kingship, will I not hold  
Thee to my breast as now—strive all I may  
Thy pains, and cares, and nursing to repay ! ’

And while I treasure up each little word,  
Thou hast all forgot ; fingerest thy sword !—

Nay, I adjure Thee by thy race and mine,  
By all the glories of our Argive line,  
My Mother's pangs of travail at my birth,  
Her threatened travail on a blood-stained hearth—  
Thrust the innocent steel within its sheath ;  
Father, forbear to will a daughter's death !  
Must I atone for Helen, and her guilt ?  
For the Adulteress my blood be spilt ?—  
Of no avail !—

At least one look, one kiss,  
To remind me dying of a dead bliss !—

Stone-dead for Me ! And yet perhaps not cold  
To a male child :—

Brother, for me be bold,  
Little though Thou art, to weep and entreat.'—

Mute He prays for his Sister at thy feet !  
And now He clasps his pretty hand in mine ;  
Looks up at Thee to fold them both in Thine !  
By thy manhood, Father, do not renounce  
Thy nestling boy, the girl Thou lovedst once !  
See the Babe ! He scents horror in the air—  
How He clings ! Part not Us ! Pity, and spare ! ”

*Iphig. in Aul.*, vv. 1368-1401 ; and 1434-1508.

## IPHIGENIA, THE TRIUMPHANT MARTYR

“ Wroth with my Father, Mother ? ’tis unjust ;  
How can we help but do what do we must ?  
And Achilles, though noble he to stake  
Life in my cause—how suffer him to take  
Arms against a host ! Mother, what if thus  
Mischance befell a stranger, and through us !

Listen, my Mother, now that I have brought  
Truth home to me ; yes, to my inmost thought.  
I have resolved myself ;—it is to die ;  
And besides, I will die gloriously !  
Read my heart, Mother ; see, how fair a show,  
And worthy of our race, my head to bow.  
This hour upon nought else but me the whole  
Of Hellas dwells—fears, hopes—with all its soul.  
’Tis mine to loose or bind ; to say the word,  
Whether waste Phrygia with fire and sword—  
For guilt of Paris venge us on his land—  
Or tempt now and again a robber band  
To repeat the foul act ; to steal from Greece  
Well-dowered brides, and hold their spoil in peace.  
My death will be a shield for Hellas ; fame  
Of it scare pirates ; blest shall be my name.

And bethink thee what right thou hast to cling  
On my behalf so fondly to the thing

Called Life ; for thou didst bear me to be one  
In a million parts, and not thine alone.  
Count men of the spear, ten thousand ; on shore,  
Seamen as many skilled to ply the oar ;  
All straining to fight the foe, e'en to death ;  
The sole check the heaving of my poor breath !  
To keep this justly falling balance straight,  
Shall we light among Greeks the fire of hate—  
Goad my Wooer for me to set his life  
Against a whole host in desperate strife—  
Why, were not Greece repaid by one Man's birth,  
Did girls by thousands lose their shares of Earth !  
And now a Goddess has been pleased to choose  
This body of mine ; how can I refuse,  
I a mortal ! Rather, while free I live,  
Myself to Hellas body, soul, I give !  
I come a willing sacrifice ; and when  
Our race shall be remembered among men,  
For me shall stand in place of wedded joy,  
Sons of my womb, the waste where once stood  
Troy !

Slaves from beyond the Pale steer here, and flout  
Free, queenly Hellas ? Perish the base thought !

Silent, my Mother ? Weepest ?—Oh, forbear !  
In pity cease ! Shed thou for me no tear ;  
Make me not a coward ; I will not have  
Thee shear those dear locks, clothe thee for a  
grave

As of a lost child ; I have stored for thee  
And me, not years, but immortality !  
No mere common earth is this body's doom ;  
An Altar, Zeus's daughter's, is my tomb !

Good Mother ! Thou believest me at last—  
I bring Greece deliverance, and have cast  
A fortunate lot?—

‘ Askest what to say  
From me to my young sisters ? ’—That I pray  
Them not to mourn.—

‘ And for Orestes here ? ’—  
Brother ! let me embrace thee, dearest dear,  
My help, all thou couldst !—

Mother, I entreat—  
Watch o’er him till he be of man’s estate—  
For I may not !—

A last look ! my one woe !  
‘ Aught else to do for me ? ’—

Wilt not forgo  
Thy anger with my sire ? He loves me well,  
Although Greece better ; it is as I tell  
Thee of Life and Me.—

No ? Then, here we part.  
And, Mother, no more tears ! Spare this torn  
heart !—

No further ; my Father’s guards shall attend  
Me to the meadow where will be the end.

Proclaim silence, Heralds ; and, Maidens, sing  
To Artemis ! already the priests bring  
Barley to awake the flame ; the King stands  
Clasping the hallowed Altar with both hands ;  
And I come—to deliver, to destroy !  
Champion of Hellas—stormer I of Troy !  
Pour ye the purifying water down ;  
And flow’rs ! my locks the sacrifice shall crown

Around the temple dance ; around the shrine.—  
Blood to content the Oracle ? Lo ! Mine !

A single moment :—

Mother, I must keep  
E'en Heav'n's feast waiting, while for thee I weep ;  
Revered, ah ! how revered ! a last Farewell !—

Dance ye, Maidens, again ; and, dancing, swell  
The Chant to Artemis ; pray Her set free,  
For my sake, our spears ; waft them o'er the sea.  
Then, when our pæans sound in Troy, let not  
Her name who sent the Victors be forgot !

Enough ;—I cease to tread Pelasgic earth ;  
No more Mycenæ mine that gave me birth,  
And nursed me for the deed in Hellas I  
Triumph to do, although by it I die !  
For me no more bright-beaming Day, that wells  
From deep fountains in the Heav'ns where Zeus  
dwells.

Adieu to Life ! it and its Fate have done  
Their worst, their best !—A knife's flash ! I am  
gone

Thither where, behind a black veil, for me  
A new World waits, and a new Destiny !

Witness, Friends, All ; I die of my free will !—  
And yet—I love thee, Sunshine ; love thee still ! ”

## TROY'S LAST NIGHT

### A BRIDE'S LAMENT

“No more, my Ilium, will be heard thy glorious  
boast,  
That Thou hast never echoed the tread of alien host;  
Alas! warriors of Hellas, a tempest-cloud on Thee,  
Hide all that Thou wast from my soul's eye when  
it strives to see.  
Thy crown of towers they have shorn; soot fouls  
thy marble brow.  
Who even in fancy could care to walk thy pavements  
now!  
In the middle of the night descended on Me my  
doom;  
Then I perished out of life, entering a living tomb.—  
Sacrifice had been offered; and at last the feast  
was done;  
Music and dancing had ceased: all the joyous guests  
were gone;  
On tired eyes sweet sleep was fluttering down;  
my bridegroom lay  
In our chamber, on the couch—idle war-gear put  
away  
Upon the wall beside him—he not thinking ever more  
To view the hated sailor-throng trampling upon  
our shore.

I too would go to rest, and set my golden mirror  
where

'Twould light me while I bound within its snood  
my braided hair—

When a jubilant shout, 'mid screams and shrieks,  
came ringing down

The night :

‘Greeks ! ours the citadel ! Now, ho !  
to sack the town !’

My beloved one snatched his spear : he was  
butchered by my side ;

No help from Dian, whom I served ere I became a  
bride ;

As in waking dream, I was rocking on the salt sea-  
flood,

Looking-back on where my City, my Ilium, had  
stood ;

Then swooned, and have breathed since but to call  
curses on the head

Of the Greek woman, with her paramour, and lawless  
bed.

Gods ! avenge Me on their marriage—nay none,  
but, it might seem,

A spume from Hell's abyss, a spiteful Demon's  
lustful dream !

Toss, briny Ocean, Helen, Ilium's bane, forsak'n,  
lone !

Her play robbed Me of home ; Heav'n ! let Her  
never reach her own !”



POLYXENA

The Achæan host hoping to give peace  
To dead Peleides, ere it sailed for Greece,  
Had vengefully resolved to soothe his Ghost  
With the blood of Her he had loved and lost  
The loathsome task was on Odysseus laid  
To announce the sentence and bring the Maid.  
With brave heart Polyxena had received  
Her doom, and went ; not for herself she grieved !

Day waned, when lo ! the Greek Herald.—He  
found

Hecuba, locks dust-dabbled, on the ground,  
Hoping nought so much as that he was come  
To drag her to the shambles at the Tomb.  
Not therefore was he sent if by the Foe ;  
The news, if dire, held glory in the woe.  
The Messenger himself was kind and old ;  
You felt the tears within the tale he told :

“ Thou knowest, Lady, Odysseus was sent  
Hither by my Lords, and how hence he went  
With thy Daughter to the sepulchre, where  
One universal whisper filled the air.  
The Hero's Son, taking her by the hand,  
Stationed her on the Tomb. There a picked band  
Of youths fenced her about, lest she might flee—  
Frightened fawn—in a spasm of agony

Next, he, having with both hands lifted up—  
Filled to the brim—a vast all-golden cup,  
Bade me silence proclaim ; and at my sign  
And shout all sounds were hushed. He, as the  
wine

Ran trickling through his fingers, cried aloud :  
' Father, I am fulfilling all I vowed ;  
May thy Son's offering conduct thy Ghost  
Where—gift from Me and the Achæan host—  
It can drink its fill of pure virgin blood,  
Retribution on Priam's traitor brood !  
In return, be good to thy comrades ; free  
Our cables ; speed Us home, where'er that be ! '

“ The host acclaimed ; he drew his golden  
blade ;

Signing to the chos'n guard to bring the Maid.  
Achæans—tens of thousands—stood around,  
In gleaming armour, the sepulchral mound ;  
And on it, all alone, a young girl stood,  
Viewed by myriads thirsting for her blood.  
It might have been a lone spot she had sought  
On Ida's slopes for solitary thought ;  
It might have been her Father's halls she trod ;  
It might have been the Temple of her God.  
No need of warriors to bar her flight ;  
Neither loved she life, nor of death felt fright ;  
Nor wrath, nor yet defiance ;—her sole pride,  
As she had lived, to be that, when she died !

She had read the sign ;—standing on the hill,  
By more than speech she counter-signed her will.  
In natural accents of a young maid,  
Spoke she ; but as she meant to be obeyed ;

Low though her voice, the hush, the summer air,  
Winged it ; spread her meaning everywhere :

“ ‘ Argives,’ she phrased it, ‘ Ye have overthrown  
My Sire’s capital city, stone by stone,  
And decree my sacrifice.—I hail death,  
But will not as a slave draw my last breath.  
Slay me ! ’tis your right ; but in Heaven’s face  
Free must I die, as it befits my race.

I cannot brook the dead below should call  
Me who was born of royal rank, a thrall.  
Look ! I will bare my skin with my own hand ;  
Strike where Ye will ; but strike at my command ! ’

The host roared ‘ Yea ! ’ and Agamemnon bade  
The guards to stand aside, nor touch the Maid.

She heard ; and plucking at her robe in haste,  
Rent it from neck down to her slender waist,  
Stripping her virgin breast and chest of snow,  
So lovely could no painter, sculptor, show ;  
Then, with one knee upon the rough earth pressed,  
Spoke words the bravest, saddest, patientest :

‘ Good Executioner, if thou shouldst care  
To stab my heart, here is my bosom bare ;  
If higher up, my throat is ready too ! ’  
And the Prince, it might almost seem, with rue,  
That it was, as his father’s son, his fate  
To divorce, from form so fair, a soul so great,  
Unwilling, willing—yet not so, nor so—  
Blindly struck whence founts of breathing flow.  
Life’s springs burst ; but heedful was she in  
death

Seemly to fall !—

When she sighed her last breath,

A weight lifted ; hearts with remorse grown faint  
Glowed now, as at the parting of a Saint !  
Funeral gifts showered down ; leaves some strewed  
Upon the body ; some fetched from the wood  
Pine to feed the pyre ; thousands sought to bring—  
Aught, vestments, or trinkets—an offering.  
Shame upon him who grudged ; mean cur, too blind  
To see how passing high such heart and mind !

“ Thus was it, Lady, that thy Daughter died ;  
And I am here, the Herald, sent to guide  
Thee where my Chiefs thy loved one’s obsequies  
Prepare, hard by where our Achilles lies.  
Old I, but ne’er in peace or war have seen  
Woman than thee more hapless—slave or Queen—  
And of Mothers a happier.—

The bliss

To have, alive or dead, a Child like This ! ”

ASTYANAX COFFINED BY HECUBA IN  
HECTOR'S SHIELD

“ My Hector's shield ! sight dearer unto Me  
Than aught life offers,—and an agony !  
It speaks to Me of glory, and a fall ;  
But, Greeks, to you henceforth it will recall,  
Not might of your Achilles, and his fame,  
Not Achæa's triumphs, but fears, her shame !  
To think, when nought survived of Troy but spoil  
And captives, soldiers should have stooped to soil  
Their hands with a child's blood ! and on what  
plea ?

That, while he lived, Troy had a destiny.  
Faint hearts not see she lay dead at the root  
Long before they trampled her underfoot.  
When Hector's happiest hour could not stay  
Our myriads from shrinking day by day,  
Vainly, he being dead, a remnant fought  
Against the armament Hellas had brought ;  
If he his City might not save, who could ?  
The wilderness tells where Ilium stood.  
Are you, Greeks, not satiate yet with gore,  
To thirst for a young child's ? The plain runs o'er  
With grown men's ;—or can it have been from  
dread

Of vengeance in the germ, that the child bled ?

Yea, vengeance from an infant—him a slave—  
Leading a host heaped in its rotting grave !

And this base act no work of night alarms ;  
Kings', scared, in council, by a Babe-in-arms !  
Be content ! he is dead !

And, strange, my pain  
Is not, my Child, that thou liest there, slain ;  
It is the hapless ' When ' ; in dreams of woes  
I dead oft saw thee dead amidst thy foes ;  
But Thou hadst fought, being warrior grown ;  
And many lay dead thou hadst overthrown ;  
Thyself in manhood's flow'r, leaving a bride  
To lead the mourners for whom thou hadst died.

A fit, a blissful end, my Darling, this,  
If aught in earth, or quitting earth, be bliss !  
This, that thy birthright was, and was its due,  
Though thy eyes saw not, was in thy soul's  
view ;

Seemed ever waiting for Thee in thy home  
To come and use it ;—but thou wilt not come !

Ill-starred ! whose fathers' halls and God-built  
tow'rs  
Have been thy death ;—from whose fragrant limbs  
—bow'rs

For Mother's kisses to sleep in—a flood  
Foams, hissing laugh of mangled flesh and blood.—

Silence, Horror ! Hark ! soft, baby lisping,  
Baby-hands — Son's, Father's — pluck my heart-  
strings !

When my lips to musings on death gave vent,  
Knowing that Thou knewest not what ' death '   
meant,



In a new charge ; fortune returns Me few  
Treasures to deck a grave, but has sent you.  
Be bier, winding-sheet, till my Babe be dust ;  
Think you hold our great Hector's self in trust ! ”



*Orest.*, vv. 211-236 ; and 253-315

## FURY-TORTURED ORESTES NURSED BY ELECTRA

ORESTES.

Sleep, friend of the friendless, none but he knows  
Thy virtues who has felt the weight of woes.  
When memory—disease and ruin—grips,  
Thou lift'st a cup of Lethe to the lips :  
None but thou could have spread a salve for Fate's  
Bruises like mine, God of Unfortunates !  
I called : thy reply, how sweet !

And I now  
Wake healed : though whence I came a blank ;  
when, how.  
That Reason fled, so much I remember still ;  
All else clean gone ; even spectres of ill.

ELECTRA.

Dearest ! My gladness when you closed your eyes !  
Would you scorn if I aided you to rise ?

ORESTES.

I scorn your touch ! Nay, clasp in your embrace ;  
And from eyes and lips wipe off their disgrace  
Of grime-stains ; brush the ragged locks away  
Off my brows ; for they intercept the day.

ELECTRA.

What menial service you will ; enough  
'Tis for a brother ; none could be too rough.  
Alas the squalid head, the matted hair !  
A wild man of the woods, fresh from his lair !

ORESTES.

To bed once more ; when the frenzy at length  
Dies down, I am nerveless, shorn of all strength.

ELECTRA.

And now would feel your feet ?

ORESTES.

'Tis not so strange ;  
The sick are ever hoping health from change.

ELECTRA.

Woe is me, my Brother ! I see the fit  
Is stirring within you ! Wrestle with it,  
While still you are yourself ! I recognize  
The terrible, mad trouble in your eyes !

ORESTES.

O Mother ! Look ! your Son ! Hear your Son's  
prayer :  
Hound not at him these Beings ! snakes for hair,  
Murder in their eyes ! Quick ! Bid the Three halt !  
They, They are making ready now to vault !

ELECTRA.

Quiet, Unhappy One ! Your eyes see nought  
Of all the Phantoms that your brain has brought  
About your bed.

ORESTES.

The Priestesses of Hell,  
Where, dog-eyed, Gorgon-faced, Awful they dwell,  
Have chased me hither, and are here to slay,  
If Thou balk them not, Phœbus, of their prey.

ELECTRA.

Lie still ! my arms encircling you shall keep  
You safe even from yourself !

Would you leap  
Straight to your death !

ORESTES.

Loose me ! You with a kiss,  
Mock-sister, betray, fling in the Abyss !

ELECTRA.

Misery ! Misery ! Whither to fly,  
When Spirit hounds of Hell have joined the cry ?

ORESTES.

My bow and quiver ! Those Apollo gave—  
Interpreting Jove's will—Wherewith to brave  
Goddesses, even These ; bidding me dare  
To shoot very Deities—should they scare  
My wits with ravings—and, mortal though I be,  
Force them to wing far out of sight of me.

Visions of horror ! see ye not—not hark,  
As the arrows whizz, rush from notch to mark ?  
A scream !

Still lingering ?

Off, lodge your pleas ;  
Charge your wounds to Phœbus, and Heav'n's  
decrees !

No pain, no fright !

Yet dazed, and panting I ;  
And tossed down from my couch, I know not why ;  
For the storm, rolled elsewhere, has left a calm,  
That laves body and soul, as with sweet balm.

Tears, Dearest, and face hid ?

Shame to impose  
Upon a girl the burden of my woes ;  
To let a sister waste away and pine  
Through fellowship in hideous griefs like mine !  
Grieve no more ; your consent was not the guilt  
That fetched these monsters ; it is the blood spilt—  
A Mother's—that they scent, red on my hands !

Phœbus, it was by thy express commands,  
Thy impulse, I did an unholy deed.  
Hence my pangs ; 'twas for Thee to intercede !  
Could I have looked my Father in the eyes,  
Asked should I kill my Mother, I surmise  
He would have prayed me not to plunge a knife  
Into the bosom which had giv'n me life :—  
Would her death give him back the light of day,  
Exchange for penalties their Son must pay ?

Fool that I was to think Heaven not strong  
To wreak vengeance for a traitorous wrong ;  
That it could be its and Justice's behest  
For a Son's hand to rend his Mother's breast !  
And, to crown the pile of folly and pride,  
That its builder should not be satisfied  
With wrecking his own fortunes, and must link  
A Sister's, making sure that both shall sink.

But lo ! a gracious respite ; the clouds seem  
To be gone ; fancy the past a bad dream.

At least, unveil now, Dearest, your loved face ;  
Cease weeping, though we be in no good case.  
When you behold me overwhelmed with care,  
Rouse me, wither the root of grim despair,  
Teach me to outface ill ; and, should you mourn,  
Even I might comforter be in turn.  
Thus, for my sake, go now to your own room ;  
Sleep, refresh yourself ; sick, you seal my doom.  
Think ! if you fade away, leave me alone,  
I die ; beside yourself, friends I have none !

## ELECTRA.

Not lonelier than I ; when I have said  
“ Die and live ” with you, ’tis all one.—

You dead,

What else for me, a forlorn maiden, reft  
Of Brother, Father, Friends, than death is left ?

But you bid me rest ; I will ; do as much  
For me ; stretch yourself down upon your couch ;  
Lie tranquil ; be not prompt to quit its arms,  
When bugbears challenge you with their alarms ;—

If he’s half cured who ails, and takes no heed,  
So, sound who play sick, might as well be sick  
indeed !

*Ion*, vv. 82-183.

APOLLO'S FOUNDLING MINISTERING AT  
DELPHI

I feel dawn in the air ; the Sun  
Has set his car ablaze to run  
His course o'er Earth ; and the Stars fly,  
Paling at the fire, from on high  
To the lap of holy Night ; our vale still is grey :  
But Parnassus's lone peaks catch and proclaim Day.

Soon to the gold ceiling a cloud,  
Desert incense, will curl, and loud,  
From the tranced Priestess in the gloom,  
Will echo words of weal or doom,  
Rendering the lessons she reads within the roar  
Rising upwards from the Chasm in the marble floor.

A festival in Delphi this ;  
And ye whose is the wondrous bliss—  
Citizenship within the Town  
That Phœbus deigns to call his own—  
Bathe in Castaly : and, returning here, be sure  
Speak, if at all, no words but reverent and pure

Fix padlocks on the idle tongues,  
That might offend the pious throngs  
Gathering in this dread abode  
To pray that Delphi's Lord and God,

Loved Interpreter of his Father Zeus's will,  
May lift, if in half lights, a corner of the veil.

Meanwhile, it is my task, and right  
I prize, to keep all fresh, and bright  
With leaves, flow'rs, waters, and look out—  
Bow and arrows ready—to rout  
Birds numberless, that, settling down, would blur  
the charm  
Of vase and statue; and, poor wretches, think no  
harm.

My whole being from Childhood's days  
Has been to spread Apollo's praise;  
And where could worship be bestowed  
Better, more gratitude be owed  
By foundling never fondled on a mother's breast,  
Never by human father guarded, fed, caressed?

Firstlings of the God's own fair bay  
I take, to brush the dust away  
From the High Altar, and sweep clean  
The floor with myrtle tresses green:—  
All plucked by me from the undying gardens  
where  
Ever-flowing springs refresh the flowers and air

Each day, and all day; while from dawn  
The Sun by his winged steeds is drawn  
Through the Heav'ns, Healer, I serve Thee;  
Blest Thou art, and Blest may'st Thou be!  
And beautiful my labour; for 'tis in thy Cause,  
To raise the glory of thy Oracle and Laws!

Servant I to Immortals ; not  
To Mortals :—whose a nobler lot ?  
Fatherless child—where could I find  
Sire royal as mine in mankind ?  
So, flinch I from no toil ; am fearful of no  
shame.—

Apollo is my shepherd, and I bear his name !

Healer ! Healer ! a name twice blest !  
His, suckled at Latona's breast !  
With bay for Thee I sweep the floor ;  
For Thee Castalia's waters pour,  
Fresh from the sparkling source, out of a golden  
ewer,  
Dipped in the fountain by a child's hands chaste  
and pure.

May I, O Phœbus, bend me low  
At thy Altar, until I go  
To toil as kind by Fate's decree !  
But my arrows ! my arrows ! See !  
All the tribes of Parnassus are trooping, in haste  
To thieve whatever they can, and lay the rest  
waste !

Were eaves built to litter and tear ?  
Eagle, you're Jove's herald ; but dare  
Choose our gold to sharpen your beak !  
Soon you'll learn how my bow can speak.  
Purple-sandalled Swan, I guess whither you oar  
now :  
'Tis to trouble Castalia's streamlet, I vow !



Trust not the God's weakness for song,  
Or my dislike to do you a wrong ;  
Take friendliest warning ; and make  
For Delos, and her briny lake.—  
A pity for a Hymn to chance to get imbrued,  
For one splash in a brook, with the minstrel's life-  
blood !

But, Phœbus ! what can be this  
Babel of scream, twitter, and hiss ?  
Of all inconceivable things,  
What this new invasion of wings ?  
This wholesale importation of rags, straw, and clay,  
Is ours an egg-farm for birds to come here, and lay ?

I'm in earnest ;—off !—or my bow  
Tries twangs of its string on you now !  
Off, anywhere, with you !—so be  
That you give up hindering me  
In my charge to pay heed to nought else but beware  
Of hurt done to the Temple by whoever they are.

Apollo, my Lord and my stay,  
Commands ! I am bound to obey.  
But the bird people mediate  
Between God and Man ; we are mates.  
Compel me not to shoot ; in charity forbear !  
For my sake as your own, wed and nest you else-  
where !

THE BACCHANTES AT THEBES

From the land of Asia to Hellas we come,  
With one cry on our lips to the ancient home  
Of Him, Lord Divine of the dance and of song.  
Hither He has led us who to Tmolus belong.

Sweet pains ours, grateful toil,  
To tread and kiss the soil,  
Where He drew his first breath  
On the bosom of Death !

As we circle these halls, hurry, men, and pray  
Dionysus to pardon ! Out of my way  
All that hymn not our God ! dare utter a word  
But of glory to Dionysus our Lord !

Blest, of fair destiny,  
Skilled in God's wisdom he  
Who knows Him. None are wise  
But they of the Mysteries !

When our ears, Lord of Revels, opened to hear  
Thy summons to the hills ! shame straightway  
and fear  
Fell off us as dust ; and over land and sea—  
How, we know not—old, young, fleet, halt, we  
followed Thee !

When invisible Thou art,  
 Thy image is in the heart ;  
 Thy pity, thy love how vast !  
 How, too, Thy anger can blast !

Thousandfold paid were we for past years of ills  
 By that first night when we burst into the hills,  
 With wild dancing and song to inaugurate  
 The rites, ivy-crowned, of Cybele the Great !  
     On that dread day his were we sealed  
     By the Mysteries He revealed !  
     His, with his spirit to abide,  
     Companions of the Sanctified !

He calls, we come : glad now to this City proud ;  
 For here maid Semele, the royal, was wooed  
 In the plenitude of her conquering charms,  
 By Zeus, stooping from Olympus to her arms ;  
     And here, from a womb lightning-torn,  
     Was our Lord Dionysus born ;  
     And the mighty Sire cleft his own  
     Flesh as a cradle for his son.

Thence—while hard-by lay mere ashes, the girl-  
     bride—  
 Remorseful lightnings keeping their watch beside—  
 Was our Lord delivered duly, God from God ;  
 Horns upon his brows, snakes hissing from his rod ;  
     And Fate bade Him go forth,  
     East and west, south and north,  
     Without sword, shield, or bow,  
     To lay citadels low ;

To win empires by mirth ; witch man, and tame  
    brute,  
By minstrelsy's magic ; with cymbal and lute  
The captive set free ; and Kings' edicts defy ;  
Inexplicable ; thunder in a blue sky ;  
    His Creed, to dance and sing  
    Is the best worshipping,  
    And to laugh and rejoice,  
    More than wailing, God's voice !

Thebes, that nursedst Semele's beauty to wean  
Zeus from his vows and plighted troth to His Queen,  
Our Lord Dionysus orders us to warn  
Thee and Thine, repent you in time of your scorn  
    Of his Godhead ; haste ! no delay ;  
    Wave Thyrsi ; don festal array  
    Of faun-skins ; blue field-flowers twine ;  
    Deck house-fronts with oak leaves and pine.

Laggards ! build ye altars to Him ! search the  
    groves  
To hallow your heads with the chaplets He loves.  
Your women already laud Semele's son.  
Thousands, tens of thousands, dancing on and on,  
    Quitting distaff and shuttle and loom,  
    Mother leaving babe, bride her bridegroom,  
    Up grim Kithæron's cavernous steep,  
    As gad-fly-bitten, riot and leap.

Wake, flute, and drum, that—where the Curetes  
    dwell—  
Infant Zeus's nurses in their Cretan cell—

By Corybantes, triple-plume-helmeted, found,  
 Wast giv'n to the Satyrs, maddened at the sound.  
     Hark to the drum as it roars,  
     While higher and shriller soars  
     The Phrygian flute, and our feet  
     Time in a fine frenzy beat.

Men, ye are warned ; we call with drum, flute and  
     lute ;  
 Take your choice, cry for pardon, or stand ye  
     mute ;  
 Be mad as we are, or sober—as ye will ;  
 For hear Him—do ye not ?—we are for the hill !  
     Strange the road : yet no guide we need ;  
     Our Lord is in front ; He will lead.  
     Tmolus, Kithæron—where we roam,  
     The print of his feet makes all home.

Sisters, remember ye the long autumn nights—  
 Weeks was it, or years back ?—on Lydian heights,  
 When away He would burst in chase of hill goat,  
 Across torrents, crags, and catch it by the throat ;  
     Then throw Him down to sleep  
     Among us on the steep,  
     While Nature, as He slept,  
     A solemn silence kept—

And before the midnight was come, start up, take  
 A flaming pine torch, and bid us all awake.  
 Ah ! how gladsome we to see his bright eyes  
     glance,  
 And join our Master in the triumphant dance ;

While at the touch of his feet divine,  
Flowed, in runlets, honey, milk, and wine,  
With clouds of frankincense earth had stored,  
Rich tribute to its laughing Lord.

Courage, sisters, again we shall Him behold,  
As on Tmolus, where earth runs wine, and streams  
gold ;

See as we have seen—God, Man—many and one—  
Divers for the world, the same for us alone ;

Locks tossing, a golden show'r, in the breeze,  
Voice, high, and then low, music in all keys,  
Eyes, blue-flashing stars, mouth a red flow'r—  
Girl for the charm, God for the pow'r !

Hark ! the drum booms its roar, its Phrygian cries,  
While the flute with notes soft and holy replies,  
Hear ye Dionysus summoning his flock,  
To frolic through the forest, from rock to rock,

Where, on Kithæron, the mad rout  
He leads—the whole air one wild shout :  
“ Evøe, Evøe ! None be adored,  
But Bacchus, Bacchus, King and Lord ! ”

## A STATE

THESEUS.

“ Would'st know what brings a State righteous  
    bliss,  
Strength, concord, not weakness, or strife?—'tis this—  
Equality of law, for each and all,  
Justice ready, shield and sword, at a call;  
Laws graven on brass—he who runs may read—  
A good man's charter, and the sinner's dread.  
For rich and poor, for lowly and for great,  
Even the scales, exact every weight.  
If fortune's minion gives his tongue the rein,  
Be the weak free to answer him again.  
Common law for Commons knows but one care,  
To sift out truth, to see things as they are.  
Gentle, or simple—Justice heeds no whit;  
Where right, where wrong, is all the world to it.  
    A commonwealth clubs wits;—respects the old,  
Scolds not the young for being loud and bold.  
Youth supplements age timorous, outworn;  
Without the green blade, where the yellow corn?  
Is one moved to advise, though raw, unknown?  
First hear the counsel; take or leave alone.  
Be silent who will, if that be one's mind;  
Some would push in front; why chain them behind?

Democracy breathes of that whence it sprung—  
 Fountain of youth ; so joys it in the young ;  
 Loves Freedom ; for itself to know no Lord ;  
 For it to be free, both in thought and word ;  
 For all to feel that upon each must rest  
 To choose what wisest is for each, and best.

Free State, households free ; a mutual pride  
 In knots that for ourselves our hands have tied.  
 Each modest home a castle is—a pale  
 That greed and rapine will not dare assail.  
 There Plenty dwells, by cheerful labour won  
 From acres handed down by sire to son ;  
 There Beauty fears not to put forth its charm,  
 With purity of heart to guard from harm !

“ And a Tyrant ? The State ? ‘ L’État ; c’est Moi ! ’  
 He dams at the source what he nicknames ‘ Loi ’ ;  
 Ladling the flood out as He wills : so it  
 Runs with his caprices, not as ’tis ‘ writ ’—  
 As though ‘ Law ’ were an edict with which they  
 It binds have no concern, except to obey !  
 No equal rights, bulwarks against foul wrong,  
 Mutual assurance—weak against strong.  
 Talks He of a ‘ Commonwealth ’ ? ’Tis a name  
 He has perverted to a lie and shame !

‘ Yet, as ’tis He, might He not wish the “ State,”  
 Under his sceptre, to be good and great ? ’

How possible when ‘ States ’ speak with one voice—  
 Their people One to mourn, One to rejoice—  
 Taking advice, galling maybe to pride—  
 Gladly suffering youth bold as the tide ?  
 Try warnings on a Tyrant ! waste of breath ;  
 Unless to stamp objects for exile, death !



High spirit and brave tongues too well He knows—  
Away He, or they—his deadliest foes!—  
His rule is to clip blades sprightliest, best  
For ripening, tall and full, before the rest ;  
To save a crop hungry, sallow, sere, thin,  
With scarce stiffness for sickles to get-in.

‘ Way for a State to be, not great, but small ! ’

Yes ; but how else can he escape a fall ?  
His doom is that virtues which make States thrive  
Breathe air in which a Tyrant cannot live !  
‘ Exceptions ? ’ Chance ; a sage drifts by the sport  
Of circumstance upon a Tyrant’s Court,  
Yet survives ; wealth may have a reprieve while  
A plea hatches to confiscate the pile ;  
Ev’n maidenhood be giv’n grace to expand,  
A bud unsullied by insolent hand,  
Till casual lust, or crueller zest  
Of innocence firing a jaded breast,  
Bring Lord or myrmidon into the bow’r,  
To make a weed of what had bloomed a flow’r.  
Always one end ! Both home and goods the Lord’s ;  
At his whim chastity, and charm, and hoards ;  
Men under him are shorn as are their sheep,  
And parents for his pleasure curse and weep !

“ Tyranny, or Commonwealth ? All for One ;  
Each for All, All for Each ? Other choice none.  
Athens has chos’n Freedom ; Freedom at home ;  
For strangers, too, like these fugitives, come  
Homeless, defenceless !

How drive from our land  
Freedom’s suppliants, at a King’s demand ! ”

## ENVY

DEVELOPED FROM A SURVIVING FRAGMENT

“What is Envy?” you ask: “Is the creature  
She, or a He?  
Who the Parents? Where bred—in Heaven, Hell,  
Earth, or in Sea?”  
Neither female, nor male, but an It; for parent-  
age, none;  
For once went I about to the Passions all, one by  
one;  
Was Anger the father?—In a fury: “I?” he  
replied:  
“Of a cur like that! You insult me!”—  
I took Fear aside:  
“Pardon, Madam,” I whispered: “Surely, the brat  
favours you”:  
“A snarling, snapping mongrel!” She plucked  
her skirts, screamed, and flew.  
As she vanished, she whimpered: “I may be timid  
and weak;  
But, Sir, insinuate you, I the Mamma to a sneak?”  
Gluttony and Avarice, next; each I questioned  
in turn.  
Like Anger and Fear they denied kin to Envy with  
scorn.

Passions are selfish ; they plunge down on a man  
in a gust ;  
The storm blows itself out ; e'en so with Revenge  
and with Lust ;  
Fear laughs at the ghost she has raised ; Wrath  
is prone to declare  
Himself sorry to have burnt a household up in the  
flare ;  
Avarice dying of hunger 'mid piled bank-notes and  
gold  
He has filched from himself—the poor wretch, halt,  
cold, sick, and old—  
Has visions of thousands to be nursed and fed from  
his hoard ;  
Pity, Remorse, may visit a sot as drunk as a  
Lord.  
At all events Vices of Sense do expect, when they  
sin,  
And jeopard human souls, some joy in repayment  
to win.  
Why relationship admit then to a Thing whose  
sole gain  
From indulgence in wrong is giving and taking of  
pain ?  
“ Fatherless, motherless ? Strange ! ” Nay,  
stranger if Envy's stock  
Had been traceable to aught that was not clod,  
stone, or block.  
What parent would not have planted some instinct  
to remind  
Of, though neglected, a duty to be honest and  
kind—

Of one point of honour—'mid the effrontery of  
Vice—

To recognize Justice's right to exact the full price ?  
A slanderer, a suborner, when did Envy e'er dare  
To abuse to their faces Fortune's favourites, or  
care

Its dupes to exalt ? Is not cheapness the joy of  
its heart ?

Commonplace devils keep pledges—trade-secrets to  
impart ;

Some pet vengeance, or lust, to indulge ; a kingdom  
to found ;

Wheels of the Universe to grease, or to clog, on  
their round.

Envy just poisons one good-enough lot with another  
Coveted for the chance it was dealt out to a brother.

Deadliest of cancers, meanest human vice beyond  
doubt ;

Footpad when at large ; eyes cast up, as of Saint,  
when found out ;

Worthy hanging, and quicklime !—

Given the How, When, and Where ;

For 'tis a Spirit, and therefore intangible as air.

Like It other Passions assume earthly substance  
to play

Their pranks upon Man, but by Man they can be  
put away

Safe under lock and key ; Envy is far craftier—try  
To catch It without an Alias and an Alibi !

Print a tale It has told you ; and serve you right  
if you stand

Pilloried " libeller," candle lit by It in each hand ;

Produce confession complete to the last dot ; and  
of that

No Court will find matter to swear away the life  
of a cat !

Where is the player of quick-changes its equal  
to leap

From patriot into traitor, out of lord into sweep,  
From a hand to a brain, and then from a mood to  
a mood,

From a dancer on the tight-rope to a nun in a  
hood ?

Justice, faith, It corrodes to lying, curses Fame,  
Courts death in a rage that its roll contains more  
than one name ;

Ev'n saps life, that Doctors may burn, cut, and  
drench ; cares no jot,

The devil It is, that its slaves wither, canker,  
and rot !



## ARISTOPHANES





## ARISTOPHANES

My wish throughout is to produce by a few specimens a fair general view of the excellence of my sitter for the moment. Among Attic tragic dramatists—whenever sufficient has survived for a decision—a choice has not been difficult. It is not easy with Aristophanes. Humour, wit, variety of colour, bitterness—sweetness, with strength—are certain of recognition. His genius scintillates among many different properties. Contemporary judgment of his powers was expressed in the epigram attributed to Plato: “The Graces searching for a shrine too harmoniously designed for a storm to fix on a fatal weakness anywhere, were content with the soul of Aristophanes.” True, doubtless; though to be able to prove it we ought to be contemporaries and fellow-townsmen.

Very often he seems to be about to deliver himself of a satisfying lyric when the demand of the comedy carries him off. He is thus diverted in the “Clouds” and “Knights.” Less in the “Birds”; for instance, bursts such as, even in my inadequate English, the call of King Hoopoe to Procne, whom Aristophanes chooses for his Nightingale. The melody flings itself to and fro, grave to gay, insolent to gentle, with a sureness in which all three Graces

might have securely lodged. None of his majestic fellow-dramatists could from this point of view have surpassed, perhaps equalled him. In his singing is more of a bird's trill than elsewhere in Greek drama, so far as time has suffered us to judge. He must have known, felt, he had a theme where his genius found the exact notes to suit it. The misfortune of our modern age is that it happens also to be the only song of sustained melody and length to illustrate and justify the universal praise. All the existing comedies abound in lyrical lines;—if they had but been available in draughts, and not in mere sips!

Readers, however, will find full sources in Hookham Frere's and B. B. Rogers's admirable translations, though Frere's only of four Plays. If they wish for a marvellous Imitation, let them read Dean Mansel's incomparable Chorus of the Clouds in his "Phrontisterion."

KING HOOPOE TO THE NIGHTINGALE

“Sleepest, my sweet Mate, still?  
Awake, and set flowing each liquid note  
At thy music’s fountain-head to trill  
From the oped gateway of thy tawny throat  
Hallowed off’rings, to thy Darling and mine,  
    Itys, of hymns Divine.  
Hark! clear through the full leafage of the yew  
Pierces the strain, and Phœbus, hearing thine,  
Tunes his lyre the long lament to renew,  
Till it overflows Zeus’s Throne, and all  
    The Heavens, and the blue  
Æther, while, at the Golden-haired One’s call  
Gathers on Olympus the Blessed Choir,  
And with my Mate’s own ‘Itys, Itys!’ cry  
Takes up the symphony of Apollo’s lyre—  
    Both dirge, and lullaby!”

LEADER OF BIRD CHORUS

“ O my Darling ! my sweetest Sweet !  
Can it be mine once more to greet  
Her whose song I dream in the grove ;  
My one theme could I sing of love,  
Though only now that I rejoice  
In Thee, sing I ; for Thou’rt my voice !  
Strike up, Flute ! tawny Darling, sing !  
Hark ! her voice has brought the Spring ! ”

*With the Nightingale.*

“ Hither, blear-eyed creatures that, Men, you are  
by birth,  
Do-nothings, figures of clay, dull compounds of earth ;  
Souls frail as Autumn leaves, May-flies without  
the wings,  
Shadows from day-dreams, death’s crop, miserable  
things !  
Listen to Us who from pure Æther draw our breath,  
Who always Are, existing free of Age and Death.  
Thoughts we think decay not. To your uttermost try  
To understand our tale of Being in the sky,  
Of Birds, and how Gods, Chaos, Erebus, began,  
Then you’ll know much more than Men ever learned  
from Man.  
This was Nature’s order ; Chaos, and Night, the first,  
Erebus, wide Hell, next, though yet there were  
none accurst.

Earth was not, or Air, or Heaven, or Sun and Day ;  
But it occurred to winged Night a wind-egg to lay  
In the multitudinous bosom, blank and cold,  
Of Erebus. Due—though Time was not—Hours told ;  
Issued longing Eros, with golden wings behind,  
That stormily flapped and flashed, as a North-west  
wind.

So, Desire was, and, having nothing else to do,  
As he flew about waste Tartarus to and fro,  
Made love to Chaos, sister of his mother Night,  
Hatching Us, for whom somehow he manufactured  
Light.

Easy work the rest between Us, below, above ;  
For We needed to fly, perch, feed, and He to love.  
Thence a hotchpotch of Erebus, Chaos, Night, and  
Hell ;

Air, water, ground, and fire, for good and bad, to  
dwell.

Heaven thus came about, with Ocean, and this Earth ;  
And the Blessed Gods, imperishable, had birth.

But it is a clear and indisputable truth  
That we had long been Gods when these were in  
their youth ;

For We were Love's first-born, endowed by Him  
with wings,

And made His distributors of all happy things.

Thus, who like us to mark the Seasons in their train ?  
Sow ? Note the scream, as he wends southwards,  
of the crane ;

And the hint the shipmaster too may take to stow  
His rudder, and bide on shore till kind winds shall  
blow.

See, the kite circles after prey ; 'tis time to shear  
The fleeces needful at the opening of the year.  
Doff your woollen cloak ; surely, that is not your wear,  
When Mistress Swallow darts in the bright spring-  
tide air.

And however you may feign to adore young Gods  
At Shrines you fancy are their favourite abodes—  
Ammon, Delphi, Dodona—for cares near your hearts,  
Wooing, trading, fighting, you seek no foreign parts ;  
You search your home sky, watching it for one  
chance flight,

And by the objects there, discern the wrong and  
right.

Talk of Divination ; pray, now, what is your word  
For a dip into the future ? Why, nought but ' Bird ' !  
' Bird ' for any start—when a slave cracks plates  
or glass,

A sudden sneeze rapped out, the braying of an ass !  
Let the rich spend on their Apollos ; you, the poor,  
Have one just as good in the sparrow at your door !

“ Could you have Gods better ? Use

Us as yours for Prophet, Muse.

Only tell Us what you will—

Hot, or cold, luke-warm, or chill,

Wind to nip the Dog-star, calm

That sleeps on the wheat like balm.

Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring

Nestle underneath my wing.

Whisper just the blend you need,

Served you shall be with thought-speed.

Not, like Zeus, by way of pomps,

Sit We on clouds, nursing dumps.

We love to flit where you are,  
And be for each a good star ;  
To bring your whole household health,  
Bright Youth, peaceful age, and wealth,  
Sleep on down softer than silk,  
Mirth, dances, feasts, and bird's milk,  
Till, bliss o'erladen, the tomb,  
As sink roses from full bloom.

" Muse of the Thicket ! my Own,  
With whom, on ash-tree, alone  
Pursuing thy varied note,  
I would through my tawny throat  
Hymn the praise of Pan, and seek  
Strains that, as to airy peak  
Cybele's lions advance  
Her Car, might inspire the dance,  
Help me, as Phrynichus ; lead  
Where I too, like him, may feed  
On ambrosia I'll distil  
Into music such as will  
Mellow what bitter must grate  
In my lot assigned by Fate.

If among you who hear me some one is inclined  
To close his life in ease, let him make up his mind ;  
Weave his lot with ours. For instance, Man's laws  
declare

Certain acts are crimes, and punish as if they were.  
'Tis most inconvenient. Common sense, we say,  
That they who have the means, and wish, to do  
them, may.

Thus, on Earth they hold it is shameful for a son  
To beat his father, while with Us it oft is done.

A Bird may run at his with bristling wing, and strike,  
Challenging : ' Where's your spur ? Out with it,  
if you like ! '

' Cock'rel of spirit,' We. So, the Moorhen who skulks  
Boasts of what in a slave would banish to the hulks.  
You see a touch of the tar-brush through a plaster  
of gold ;

Pea-fowls, a troop, swear the crow a cousin of old.  
As for treason, turn of back to foes in a fight,  
Our type's the Partridge, whose point of honour  
is flight."

When the nightingale fell mute,  
Ceasing warbling, voice and flute,  
The Swans, from where, on the banks  
Of Hebrus, sat their serried ranks,  
Took up—was it the appeal  
To all humankind to kneel,  
Praying Air's Powers of their grace  
T'accept homage from Man's race ?  
We know only there rang out  
Through luminous clouds a shout  
That drove wild beasts and the herds  
Cow'ring before the Lord Birds.  
Blue sky overlay the tide,  
And Olympus all replied  
By repeated thunderings,  
Whereat wonder seized its Kings,  
And Graces and Muses cried for joy, or shrieked  
in dismay,  
Though which we are not told, and it's impossible  
to say !



## HORSEMEN AND HORSES

Poseidon, King, Charioteer !  
Joying, like ourselves, to hear  
The thunder of brass-hoofed steeds,  
Neighing in the water-meads ;  
To see the waves swirl, when cut,  
Trained oars leaping in and out ;  
To mark how young rivals face  
Good, ill fortune in a race ;—  
Inspire Us Knights ! Thou whose sway  
Geræst, Sunium obey,  
Let thy Golden Sceptre nod !  
Phormio's friend, Athens' God  
Will smooth the stormiest seas,  
And bid blow the kindest breeze !

All praise to Thee, and to Pallas, who suffers Us  
to bear

Her the yearly Robe She graciously vouchsafes to  
wear.

With your joint help, by land and sea our fathers  
glorified

This fair country everywhere, and remain still its  
pride.

Could it else have been with warriors who, did foes  
appear,

Counted not odds, only to set on with sword and spear,

At a fall in a wrestling bout, recked nothing of  
the pain,

The one thought to be up and about, be let try  
again ?

That's our sort of mind ; as was too our Generals'  
of old.

Not they to refuse to take command till they had  
been told

On what scale their pay, their precedence, and how  
fed.

So ours enough to have fought for City and Gods,  
and bled.

If anything more, when Peace has come, not to be  
grudged such

Privileges as long hair, bath-combs—surely 'tis not  
much !

Pallas, Goddess, whose right hand

Is aye raised to guard our land,

Land most Holy, being Thine ;

Dow'r'd by Thee with Arts Divine,

Arts that, both, mightiest are,

Poets' Art, and Art of War.

Haste Thee, Sovereign Lady ! bring

Aid to Us that fight and sing.

On our borders, and abroad,

Our helmed Champion Thou hast stood ;

But not only, armed, dost Thou

Organize victory ; now

This Theatre's the field, and dire

As steel's clash is Choir's with Choir.

Come, and Victory ! for She

Is sworn of our Company

For Choral dances, as for arms,  
And will teach Us soldiers charms  
To win triumphs on the Stage,  
As in the campaigns we wage.

First, We would tell our friends here of matters  
that we know best,

The very foundation whereon all our achievements  
rest.

Remember, when you praise your Horsemen for  
things they have done,

The Horses' part on our raids, and in battles We  
have won.

If at times We may jumble up what We did, and  
what they,

No wonder; for that aught We did alone 'twere  
hard to say.

You should have seen how by instinct, needing no  
guiding hand,

They leaped aboard the transports at the bugle's  
sole command.

It was almost as if they sat down on the benches;  
then

Bent to their oars, and rowed, with the endurance  
quite of men;

Even as if they brought cups, and rations with them  
of food—

Can it have been garlic and onions, as We under-  
stood?—

At least they hunted the sands for crabs that to  
Poseidon cried:

“Nor on sea, nor land, can we from these Horses  
hide!”

And having supped as it pleased them, with their  
hoofs, dug beds out,  
Searching for bedding too—of all which there's as  
little doubt  
As that afloat they never stopped neighing :  
“ Pull hard, lay to ! ”  
That is to say just : “ Hippapai ! No slacking !  
Old Jee ! Row ! ”

*Nubes*, vv. 275-290 ; and 299-313-

## SONG OF THE CLOUDS

Clouds that have been sleeping upon the meadows,  
wake, and rise ;  
For, though hoarse Ocean begot us, our home is  
in the skies.  
See ! wings, sparks of living light, as Dawn touched  
the dew we were,  
Open out, and are bearing us into the Upper Air.  
There we float, each morn a new birth, for, though  
'tis thought  
The rainbow we leave behind us means we have  
come to nought,  
We are eternal, whether darkness visible, black  
night,  
Or, as now, re-woven into a golden fleece of light.  
Space is our playing field ; so, our pastime is,  
mounting high,  
Over some loftiest peak, clad in forests, to descry  
Watch-towers far away that guard the harvests,  
and the soil  
That nursed them in its bosom, from becoming  
foemen's spoil ;  
Or to drink-in the murmurs of rushing rivers,  
and roar  
Of the solemn-voiced Sea hurling itself upon its  
shore.

But haste! the Sun, Æther's tireless eye, paves  
Earth with gold rays;  
Maidens, it is high time for us to doff our mantles  
of grey haze.  
Lo! we shed the kindly rain we brought to the  
fields we love,  
And, circling to and fro in blue immensities above,  
Pause, as we tread our sacred mystic measures, o'er  
the land  
Smiling and shining with the fruit from Pallas's  
own hand.  
Hail! the realm of Cecrops, cherished for its race  
good and true;  
For its awe of rites Divine forbidden to common view.  
Here, doors wide open, Mysteries are solemnized;  
the sin  
Is unknown of sacrilegious intruders pressing in.  
Nowhere richer are oblations to the Gods in Heaven;  
More sacrifices and feasts to them at all seasons  
given.  
Land none has Temples higher-roofed, statues  
therein as fair;  
Or whence and whither Processions more glorious  
repair.  
Listen, Sisters, for it is the advent of laughing  
Spring,  
Bacchus everywhere leads his dances, and the hills  
ring  
With the beat of harmonious feet; and solitudes  
that were mute  
Burst into hymns to the blithe God, and the full  
music of the flute!

# THEOCRITUS





## THEOCRITUS

THE first impression in passing from Greek vers of the Golden Age or Ages to that of the composite Alexandrine and Sicilian schools is of a descent from Groves of the Muses to a Library. In exemplars of the class we are always being reminded, or seek to remind ourselves, of books. Singers of the period were sensible of the weakness. They attempted to cure or dissemble it by assuming a rustic personality. Probably all more or less fell into the habit; affected bucolic piping; though time has spared complete illustrations only by one of the number.

To prove the difficulty, without exposing the absurdity of the experiment, as in Pope's attempts, it is enough to refer to Virgil's "Eclogues," except the "Pollio." The Mantuan failures enhance our respect for Theocritus, who most nearly succeeded. "A Memory" is a nosegay of Greek country scenes. "Daphnis" is but little inferior; and "Daphnis and Menalcas" aims higher, without loss of simplicity. Still, there is an aggressive unreality to me about it all, even, and especially, the famous "Cyclops and Galatea." When it is best done, to borrow a well-known censure, the surprise is at the pains to attempt an impossibility. Theocritus ranks high for

greater qualities. The "Adonis" and "A Fisherman's Dream" are two perfect dramas in miniature. Never was a gift more exquisitely offered than in "An Ivory Distaff." But for a story-teller in verse match me the poet of "The Infant Heracles" and of "Hylas"!

He is admirable because manifestly he enjoys the romance as he evolves its course. During it his fancy broods over every touch or touch to be added. Hylas is so unforeseeingly absorbed in the fulfilment of his service, unless for a passing glance at the bright flowers around, at the sparkle of the bubbles as he dips the pitcher, with a hope perhaps of praise for despatch by his two mighty heroes. A moment, and boundless despair, with a delirium of joy for the triad of Nymphs, and full content for the poet. Satisfaction for him is as unmistakable in the wondrous myth of Heracles and the Dragons. There the roll of the few verses, unlike the leap of the fountain, is slow as the drum-beat in a funeral march. Theocritus has this power of compelling sympathy with the distilling of his fancies, whatever the text. On any subject he is thoroughly companionable. It matters not if it be a day's sightseeing by two gossiping Dorian dames in a Palace of the Ptolemies, dream-telling between a pair of starveling fishermen—portraits to the life—a music duel, with two winners—a Midsummer holiday, Bucolics—Daphnis, Cyclops, what-not—or most innocent love-weaving on an Ivory Distaff!

*Idyll VII (Part of).*

A MEMORY

Hail, deep-bosomed Midsummer ! to recline  
On freshly-cut green branches of the vine,  
And the sweet mastich, while above our heads  
Elms and poplars quiver and intertwine.

Heard ye not, Comrades, how the stream beside,  
From its source in the cave where its Nymphs abide  
Murmured of mysteries I fain had read,  
But too fast, aye faster, its ripples glide.

On the boughs flame-coloured cicalas strung  
Endless chains—chatter—as when Time was young :  
And from afar the fluting of a thrush  
Rippled from thick acanthus brakes among.

Crested larks, finches, trilled ; the turtle-dove  
Tired not in his bower to coo his love ;  
Brown bees flitted round the brook ; Summer  
breathed  
In fruitage through garden, field, orchard, grove.

Trees, pear and apple, need not there be pressed  
For yield ; they roll, at each passing step, a feast ;  
Plums—the boughs break under their purple load  
Grapes haste mature their juice to glad a guest.

Wine of such brand had cheered a future God,  
When Heracles and Chiron shared abode

    In garden and grotto like this ; and, broached  
By the Nymphs, gave spirit that fired the mood

Of the mild Cyclops into hurling rocks,  
And dancing, to the mirth of Etna's stocks

    And stones ; not his wonted innocent draughts  
On the high pastures from his fleecy flocks.

As myself couched by the stream in the shade,  
Lulled by music, birds and cicadas made, .

    They brought me there a cup crowned to the  
    brim  
From the jar that in the fire's warmth was laid.

I drank, and pledged my faith I would return  
When in July the sickle should have shorn

    The standing wheat and barley, and have spread  
For the brisk threshers the abounding corn ;

Yes ; and would, as, joyous, I shook, the while,  
On the winnowing fan, the dwindling pile,

    Draw from Demeter, as adust she stood,  
Clasping sheaves, poppies, an approving smile.

Ah ! blest garden-land, where the Muses pour  
Nectar for a Bard, and bees each bright hour

    Distil honey for him ; and his gay toil  
Is but to toss grain on a threshing-floor !

*Idyll XVI.*

POET AND PATRON

Into an unkind age Bards now are born.  
Zeus, the Muses' Sire, sees They meet not scorn.  
Goddesses' birthright theirs, to house with Gods ;  
They find scant time to visit men forlorn.

Yet, as of old, Earth will her Poets bear,  
With, to each, Graces who deign breathe our air,  
And have the gift of bringing where they light  
Amulets against moth and rust ; not care.

So, once, I, laid neglected on the shelf,  
Wishing these to lie softer than myself,  
And enjoy a comfort to me denied,  
Sent them to sup, lodge, and sing in homes of pelf.

Furious they returned, and with sore feet,  
Soles ground off by the stones of street on street,  
Scolding me for their bootless errand, yet  
Finding a warm heart, on bare boards, with crusts  
to eat.

" Slander on our Age ! would rich man alive  
Flout gift of fame—the crown for which all strive ? "  
Nay ; point out one off whose excess of wealth  
A Bard lives, and a Patron shall survive

Each, his hands deep within his pockets, feels  
His Cash, complains that if he gives he steals ;  
    Grudges to give the very rust away :  
“ Money for verse ! and stint it for my meals ! ”

Then another, offended to be told  
That he honours poetry less than gold,  
    Retorts that, far from that, he reckons it  
Of value too high to be bought and sold.

Besides, a purist he ; has never found  
The true note in Moderns ; tries to expound  
    Why he dares not give : “ Ah ! that Homer  
    lived,  
Harped in his town, and passed the plate around ! ”

What ails you, Misers ? gold on gold ye heap !  
And what the crop that ye expect to reap ?  
    The wise dispense to Heav'n part, part to kin,  
Part use on guests, that will be kept, to keep ;

And last, exceeding all in profit, part  
To ministers of Muses and the heart.  
    Ghosts speak through these in death, and walk  
    the Earth.  
To immortalize is the Poet's art !

Antiochus, Aleuas, King, and Lord,  
Each ruled wide realms, and had vast treasures  
    stored.

Yet shadows the whole, like themselves when once  
Charon on Acheron shipped them aboard.

But the Bard of Ceos basked in their sun ;  
His glancing lyre from its rays, one by one,  
    Wove endless themes—Canticles—War, and  
    Games.

Bards' gratitude forbids Oblivion !

Unless for a blind Minstrel's harp divine,  
Who had heard of Hector, and Priam's line,  
    Of Ulysses, in Hell, the Cyclops' cave,  
Or loyalty in a keeper of the swine ?

The Great dead thus live Greatly still, in Great  
Verse, prized by the Great when called hence by  
    Fate !

Where are the rich now that are not dead in life  
Under more, more gold, choked by its dead weight ?

Is there no Sovran One verse can reward  
For Earth's favours, as Ionia's Bard  
    Stock of Ajax, Achilles—none whom Time  
Will thank Song for embalming in its regard

How of Him who stirs Sicily to arm,  
At whose name Carthage shudders with alarm ?  
    Whose plumed helm to Syracuse glory waves,  
Rout, carnage, to the Punic locust swarm ?

Many where Arethusa's waters flow  
The Muses inspire ; why do not they go—  
    It is their natural province—and hymn  
The brave deeds of the sword of Hiero ?

For Me—the Graces and I share one home.  
Neither they uncalled ; nor I singly come ;  
    For what soul could ever the Graces know  
And consent henceforth by itself to roam ?

Is it strange—their charity, with my pride—  
That they will not be severed from my side,  
    And I believe before such parting is,  
For me it were happiness to have died !



*Idyll XXI.*

A FISHERMAN'S DREAM

Want is a keen taskmaster ; hard the load,  
And incessantly it applies the goad.  
Work is not ready to hand ; men must go  
And plague their wits to find what they can do.  
Then, toil they with their muscles as they may,  
Care ends not with the labours of the day.  
It mocks them with wakefulness long ere light,  
Having made them sport for visions of the night.

Two fishermen I knew : they shared between  
Them a wattled hut, where I have often been.  
On the pebbles, for they were old and poor,  
They had strewed dry sea-weed, a make-shift floor.  
As bed and pillows—others they had none—  
Bundles of leaves were piled, to lean upon.  
Anywhere rough implements of their trade,  
Baskets, rods, hooks, bait, lines, mats, cords, were  
laid.

These, with “ slops ” for cushions, a pair of oars,  
And a crazy propped boat made their whole stores.  
Scant chattels. No cooking utensils. Bare  
Subsistence ; hand to mouth ; nothing to spare.  
No neighbours had they but the sea, that pressed  
Them close, and penury, hugged to their breast.  
Such their state, and fixed, when, the moon, one night,  
Having not half run her course ere sun light,

The pair woke ; want and toil, loud watchmen,  
    stirred  
Their eyelids earlier than the first bird.  
Yet innocent they as flow'rs a bee sips,  
And ceased from sleep, a song upon their lips.

## ASPHALION.

“ They were liars, Friend, that were wont to say  
Zeus takes from summer nights to add to day.  
This night, and not yet near dawn, I have seen  
Ten thousand dreams ! what, Heavens ! can it  
    mean ?  
Is it I that hasten, too fast to count,  
Passing hours, or is the sun slow to mount,  
And bids the night ‘ mark time,’ until he find  
Fuel to start his car, and wake mankind ? ”

## COMRADE.

“ Summer, Asphalion, runs its full course.  
If there be default, our old foe's the source.  
Accuse not night of stealing hours from light.  
Poverty, its cares, are the thieves, not night.”

## ASPHALION.

“ You ; can you read dreams—have learnt to  
    divine ?  
If so, pray, listen, and interpret mine.  
It sounds good ; and we partners on the deep,  
Must share, if good there be, my luck in sleep.  
So, as 'tis a joint concern, and, 'tis said,  
The prime dream-reader is the wisest head—

Which is yours—please, advise me for the best.  
When you hear my story, you can suggest.  
Talk at least is better than to wait morn  
On leaves with to every one a thorn.  
Dreary vigils when one cannot afford  
Candles against the Dark, as Town Hall lord,  
Whose minutes, night as morn, are worth in pay  
Ever so much beyond ours, work or play.”

COMRADE.

“ At all events, time’s cheap ; I do not grudge  
Use of my ears. Tell the dream. I’ll judge.”

ASPHALION.

“ Tow’rds evening I fell fast asleep. ’Twas not  
Drowsiness from overeating. You wot,  
We dined early, and did not overload  
Our stomachs—for good reason—with much food.  
I found myself on a rock. As I shook  
My line, with the bait wriggling on the hook,  
A well-nourished alderman of the deep  
Took the worm ; for, as dogs crusts, so, in sleep  
Fishermen can dream a bite. I dreamt mine,  
And felt my hurt spoil straining rod and line.  
Knowing the hooks weak, I stretched both hands out,  
Wrestling, to grasp the monster round about.  
Then, feigning he harboured revenge, I cried :  
‘ You would fight ? ’ and my rod struck at his side.  
Here the struggle ended. I hauled ashore  
A Golden Fish, all covered thickly o’er  
With scales of gold ! Ah ! joy ! though, to begin,  
A shadow haunted me, of mortal sin :

‘ What, if pet of Poseidon’s, my own lord ?  
 Or special gem in Amphitrité’s hoard ? ’  
 Howbeit, gently loosened I the hold  
 Of the greedy hooks on my precious gold ;  
 Then, tugged by ropes the creature up the shore ;  
 And, calling all the Gods to witness, swore  
 That never would I tempt the sea again,  
 But turn Gold-king, and on dry land remain !

On that I woke.

To starve ; and keep my vow ?  
 Forswear ; be damned ?

Say, which. I bow.”

COMRADE.

“ ‘ You ’ neither caught the fish, nor swore the  
 oath.

No need to be alarmed ; illusions both ;—  
 Like most dreams—though we may dream open  
 eyes.

Your dream-rock a likely place ? Hope no prize ;  
 But search for catch to eat.

To starve, your wish ?  
 Sleep, dream, in work-hours ; and hook golden  
 fish ! ”

*Idyll IX.*

DAPHNIS AND MENALCAS

PEASANT.

“ Drive, Boys, the cattle to their pasture ; see  
they graze  
The boscage together, not their several ways.  
Now, do not you feel in your throats the prick  
of Spring,  
That the air is music ? Breathe on your pipes,  
and sing.  
Daphnis, you lead off on some rustic theme, and try  
To play as you feel ; and Menalcas shall reply.”

DAPHNIS.

“ Hark ! a calf lows, and a heifer responds ; and  
there  
The beauty is for me that nought is strange, or rare.  
To us plain countrymen Nature’s marvel is She  
Endows with charm the fitness of all things that be ;  
And our pipings, if rude, are innocent and sweet,  
For they are echoes, and but reflect and repeat.  
Nature how kind both in toil and in rest ! I lead  
My herd to pasture, whether in glade or on mead ;  
Then, seek, work done, the shaded margin of a  
stream  
Leaping headlong from Etna’s snowy slopes, and  
dream

On a leafy couch I spread with white heifer hide,  
A Sou'-wester's spoil that dashed strays down a  
cliff's side.  
Is the couch less soft for my loss in the beasts?  
less fair  
Is June that next follows the Dog-Star's blasting  
glare?  
Does a lover, while clasped within two milk-white  
arms,  
Let clouds of parental wrath darken present charms?"

## MENALCAS.

"Nor do I complain. No Mother can mine excel.  
I lie on her lap; nor could elsewhere better dwell.  
Etna is She; and though She may both scowl and  
storm,  
To me She is aye gracious; lovely too in form.  
She gave me a fine cavern in a hollow rock,  
With sheep and goats, ever so many; such a flock  
As none will ever see but in a dream; my bed  
Is furnished from their fleeces; with their skins I  
spread  
A carpet to warm the stone flooring for my feet.  
In fancy I can smell, cooking for me to eat,  
A stew of dainty entrails—nothing else so good!—  
For my Mother finds me, not house alone, but food.  
Fuel also; oak-boughs in Summer; and, when blow  
Icy winds, and the tracks are buried deep in snow,  
Weathered beechen fagots heaped plentifully on  
My hearth—all, loving Etna's bounty to her Son!  
Winter I mind as little as the toothless feel  
Of taste for nuts beside a dinner of fine meal!"

PEASANT.

“Excellent both! I should have found it hard  
to say  
Whether of the pair has done better with his  
lay.  
I have a crook, a young tree from our land, and  
grown  
So workmanlike craftsmen might claim it for their  
own.  
Accept it, Daphnis.

For this shell, spiral, and great  
That I caught on the Icarian beach with bait—  
A thing of beauty, and the fish within so fine  
As to make enough for the five of us to dine—  
Menalcas, it is your prize. But beware the din,  
If you set yours to its mouth, trumpeting therein!”

THEOCRITUS.

“Pastoral Muses! Will Ye not again draw near,  
As when I voiced you to these herdsmen? let  
them hear  
My accents, your song! mock me not with my poor  
verse,  
When I hope it is your melody I rehearse!  
Ye bound me Minister and Priest—bade me rely  
On your presence. As a cicala will reply,  
Echoing cicala, ant to ant, hawk to hawk,  
So promised Ye that when my lips shall move, Ye  
talk.  
Ye are my heart, my very life! Bliss that Ye  
come  
Hither, not day-by-day lodgers, but to your home!

Yet, both strange and sweet, as sleep to care and  
disease,

Springtide to March, in dry places honey to bees !

Hail ! warrant for pure joy, that no foul spell,  
nought base

Shall trespass whereso'er your feet have left a trace.

Hail ! Ye that fragrance breathe from lowliest  
flower,

And disdain in Man nothing but what will lower ! "



## *Idyll XVIII*

### HELEN : EPITHALAMIUM

On a time in Sparta one might have been aware  
Of twelve virgins with iris blossoms in their hair,  
Before a palace that by frescoes told, inside,  
Abode a Bridegroom, newly-married, with his Bride.  
He Menelaus, of King Atreus younger son,  
Daughter she of Tyndarus, wooed by him and won.  
The Bride had been led at eve to the Bridegroom's  
home ;

And her sisterhood, Sparta's flower, now were come,  
Ere torches fought the dusk, to bid her their farewell,  
In a last loving, Hymeneal canticle—  
Changeful music, grief for the comrade they had lost,  
Joy in Queen of Sparta, a glory, and a boast.  
They took order for the dance, and with glancing  
feet,  
Threading a maze in and out, faultless time they  
beat.

While the nuptial hymn in pauses echoing rang  
Through the palace, as the girls loud and louder sang:  
“ Surely, Thou, dear Bridegroom, art not slumber-  
ing yet !

None but sheer sluggards sleep before the sun has  
set.

She is thine to-morrow, morrow's morrow, this year,  
And many ; but for us no playmate will be here.

Grudge not our minutes ! To have drawn for lot  
a life,  
And not content with that ! a Paragon for wife !  
On thy way hither some good Spirit must have  
blest,  
Fortunate Thou, thy rivalry with all the best  
For Her who, among the Achæans, peerless one,  
Alone could make Thee son-in-law to Saturn's Son.  
Ah ! and for greatness that may come, if like bring  
forth  
Aught like, who could better than we presage the  
worth ?  
For the same age are we, and the same courses ran  
By Eurotas, following the brave Spartan plan.  
We numbered four times sixty, each accounted fair  
Among her kinsfolk, though all of us had the air  
Of waiting upon Helen ; nor were wroth we with  
the cause  
More than Winter with Spring, night morn :—just,  
Nature's laws :—  
Nay ; proud as garden of tall cypress seen afar,  
As car of fast steeds, that whirl it in race or war !  
Jealous we ? the jest ! We sunned ourselves in  
the rays  
Of a perfectness to bask in, more than to praise !  
Lo ! the cheeks and their roses ! the gleam of the  
hands  
About beam, shuttle, web, reading the brain's  
commands !  
See fingers hover o'er the cithern ! watch the throat !  
Hark, Goddesses ! She hymns You ; the chants  
to Heav'n float !

All Arts Hers ; in her eyes nestle Aphrodité's Doves ;  
And Hide-and-Seek their Queen plays there, and all  
the Loves !

O loveliest, our Charmer. Thou must stay at  
home ;  
While we at early morn may please ourselves, and  
roam.

We shall range the Gardens, and through the leafy  
glades

Wander at our pleasure ; for are we not free maids ?—  
Yet stray lambs still ; thralls of a lingering regret  
For our lost leader, whom never can we forget.

At least we will plait a wreath of sweet meadow  
flow'rs,

And hang it on a plane to tell of happy hours ;  
Pouring from a silver flask oil beneath the tree ;  
With this in Doric : ' I am Helen's ! honour Me ! '

Joy ! Bride, Bridegroom ! may Aphrodité dower  
both

With equal fondness, and inviolable troth !  
May Latona grant happy childbed ! Zeus a flood  
Of prosperity inherited with the blood ;  
So, old nobility be rooted in our Earth—  
Surviving accidents of time—by right of birth.  
Now, Dearest, and thy Dearest, Good Night !

Happy dreams

Of one another, till Dawn, with her early beams  
Stirring a first crow, from the roost, of Chanticleer,  
Bid you awake ; for we shall all by then be here !  
Farewell too, Hymen Hymenæus, and rejoice ! for rare  
Thy fortune hands and hearts to link as with this  
Princely Pair ! "

*Idyll XIII.*

HYLAS

I wonder not that it is hard to trace,  
Upon the father's side, Dan Cupid's race ;  
For of a host of attributes is none  
He may not claim by birth as some God's son,  
Heav'n still, whithersoever he may roam,  
Remains his natural and primal home.  
It is Man's conceit that, where'er his birth,  
His scene of habitual work is Earth.  
To wait on Beauty Love exists ; his sphere  
Could not be ours, with no to-morrow, here.  
How beautiful is beauty none who dwell,  
Blear-eyed, in a decaying world can tell !

Heracles was probation-God ; the love  
He cherished for Hylas was from Above.  
His heart of bronze, sensible of no qualm  
At a lion's onset, would lose its calm  
With a thought he was not by to bar offence  
To the lad, life, and limb, and innocence.  
With a father's large hopes and fears he yearned  
To instruct in all good that he had learned ;  
Glad to foresee the graceful boy would grow  
Brave and famous as he, without the woe ;  
A yoke-fellow trained after his own mind,  
True and loyal, a pattern to mankind.

Never were they apart, from when Dawn's white  
Steeds started for Heaven, to fall of night,  
What time perchers watch their nest for a shake  
Of mother's wing to signal laden beak.

So, when Jason called the flower of Greece  
To join his Crusade for the Golden Fleece,  
Heracles was among the first aboard,  
And Hylas, uncounted, came with his lord.

Well rowed the oarsmen, well the helmsman  
steered ;

The Dark Rocks themselves had been safely cleared.  
Erst sunk and jostling, from this date they stand  
Isles, Argo's monument, on either hand.

And, swooping, like an eagle, on its breast  
The sea tossed the ship through ; to wait at rest  
Within the mouth of Phasis, wintering,  
Secure from sharp frosts, and rough winds, till Spring  
Should call lambs abroad, and the Pleiads rise  
To remind the crew of its enterprise.

Then, all re-embarked, and, with three days' aid  
From south-west winds, the Hellespont had made.

In the Propontis—the Kianian shore—

Rich ploughland that—they found where they could  
moor,

Disembarked, the Thirty's wont was in pairs,  
Sorted at choice, to divide household cares.

Heracles, Telamon, were messmates ; so,

One cut rushes and galingal, that grow  
Largely on the salt meadows there, and spread  
To ease the rigour of a sailor's bed.

His comrade dressed a meal, by mother wit,

With ready appetites to season it.



Sailors grieve not for the lost star, but hail  
The promise in its fall of a fair gale.

Hylas was mourned for a moment—no more.

Only one pulse beat quicker than before !

Ah ! heartbreak for Heracles !

“ Gone the lad ? ”

He snatched bow, arrows, wonted club, and had  
Tracked him to the fountain ; there, roared thrice ;  
Been answered, as from far, by a thin voice.

On the Hero the Boy's cry of despair

Worked as on bearded lion in its lair

The distant cry of a strayed fawn. His heart

Throbb'd too with hunger—a father's—

The smart.

A rankling longing, as to clasp a ghost,

Drove him through pathless wastes after the Lost !

Frenzied pilgrimage o'er a world of space—

Prize ever receding in the blind race—

Exchanging fleshly pangs in deserts curst

By a pitiless sun with heat and thirst

That he felt not, for agonies of soul

Lashing him to'ards an impossible goal ;

Till, unpaid for heart and faith broke, he found

“ Self ” in Colchis, whither was Argo bound.

Among his Labours none like this ; the rest

He wrestled with, and threw ; here, in his breast,

A void demanded to be filled, in vain.

Nor least for such as Heracles, the pain

To plead as an excuse, a private grief,

For breach of duty that was first and chief ;

To desert the post he had filled aboard

The Argo ; be false to his plighted word ;

Forfeit the glory of dowering Greece  
With a timeless trophy, the Golden Fleece.  
His comrades felt for him, and had approved  
Pious search for the bright boy whom all loved,  
But could not outstay dawn. Sails wooed the air ;  
How suspect Heracles would not be there ?  
Of Greek champions to be defaulter He !  
So, with sad heart, Jason put out to sea.  
And Hylas ? sunk in a deep pool.

And dead ?

How not ?—with water—fathoms—overhead.  
If Nymphs did the deed, and for love—what then !  
To die for love, is no rare doom for men.  
Nay ; Beings so beautiful could not have  
Drawn Boy so beautiful down to his grave.  
We read, his comforters pursued their quest  
Till they assured him life among the Blest.  
Zeus could not refuse when three Naiads prayed  
To have their charming prey immortal made.

Happy ? if ward of Heracles ne'er thought  
Eternity of ease was dearly bought  
By loss of a mortal career, when days  
Close in a hero's even-song of praise,  
And blind Homer harps of Telamon's son,  
Doer of deeds that Hylas might have done !



*Idyll I.*

DAPHNIS

THYRSIS.

“ Well met, Goatherd, on this Midsummer day !  
Our flocks repose ; and we may rest as they.  
I long for music ; hark, as we recline  
Beneath this elm, the whispers in the pine  
Yonder to the brook bubbling at our feet—  
Melody the whole, various as sweet.  
Add your piping ; till sunset sends us home.  
I will mind your she-goats ; they shall not roam.”

GOATHERD.

“ Nay ; I to pipe at midday ? bold the man  
Who pipes when, tired with the chase, sleeps God  
Pan.

But, Thyrsis, you knew Daphnis ; and his pain,  
How he sickened, died, for love ! Ah ! that strain—  
None like it, even of yours, though you are  
Our chief in rural song beyond compare—  
With which you vanquished Chromis ! As I live,  
Sing it again, and I would gladly give  
My she-goat Kimætha, with milk to fill  
Two pails, besides twin kids she suckles still.

Nor that alone—a cup two-handled, new  
As from the chisel, with, as there they grew,

Ivy tendrils, yellow fruit, marigold,  
While, about, the acanthus finds foothold.  
Look inside ; you will see a woman stand  
Between men, one of them on either hand ;  
So wrought with marvellously cunning art  
That all must know she plays a double part.  
Look again ; a fisher prepares to cast  
A huge net—will old sinews crack, or last ?  
Then, inches, miles off—measure, or suppose—  
A vineyard, clustering grapes, long, ripe rows.  
'Tis watched by three—two foxes, and a boy ;  
And each in the trio hugs his own joy.  
' One ' eyes the child's dinner, and smacks his lips ;  
' Two ' tears the rich bunches down in broad strips ;  
' Three ' dreams when locust-swarming will begin ;  
And plaiting his trap, hears the buzz within.  
A wonder—bewildering—the whole bowl !  
The fingers to have worked it—and the soul !  
Not cheap ; it cost me a cheese-cake, and goat,  
To a sailor on a Calydon boat.  
But that ! what to the rapture it will bring  
To me if only you vouchsafe to sing.

Fear not envy, no room for aught but dread  
Lest yourself hoard the pearl till you be dead.  
I loathe to think Lethe should wash you bare  
Of it without ev'n memory for heir."

## THYRSIS.

" Muses, may I assent ? Your servant I.  
But where were ye, Nymphs, to let Daphnis die ?  
Did Pindus and its glades tempt you to stray  
Beyond his moans' reach as he pined away ?

For ye were not on Etna's top, I know,  
Or where Acis and great Anapos flow.  
Dead! Wail, jackals, wolves! what would not  
deplore

Our Daphnis? Hark! that groan—a lion's roar.  
Cows and calves low; and as their sad complaints lull,  
The dirge is swelled by some bellowing bull.

Hermes from Olympus descends in haste:

'Dying, Daphnis, for love! Ah! cruel waste!'

Herdsmen, shepherds, goatherds—all with the same  
Question: 'Poor Daphnis, what befalls you?' came.

With them the Garden-God: 'But She, thy love,  
Seeks thee by all springs, in every grove.

Why not go, be happy? Nay, as thou wilt;

Die of a pique; on thy own head the guilt!'

Daphnis stood mute; he scorned to make reply;

Chewed love's bitter cud; it was Destiny.

Aphrodite came, wrathful, but in guile

Disguising her resentment with a smile:

'Didst not Thou, Daphnis, boast Thou would'st  
"throw" Love?

Which, pray, is under now, and which above?'

'Wait,' said He: 'be not too triumphant yet;

For all tells me my sun begins to set;

And thy sovereignty closes with the life

That Thou aye plottest to convulse with strife.

So, where I go, I shall be free, and vow

To be a vengeful pest to Thee below.

Thou that tauntest hast had of yore to yield

To men; Diomed on the battlefield,

Anchises on Ida; what of the Youth

Who preferred to thy arms a wild-boar's tooth?

Enough ! wolves, and jackals, and bears, that dwell  
In your lurking lairs, and rock dens, farewell !  
Look no more to see Herdsman Daphnis lead  
His cattle to the river o'er the mead.  
Farewell, Arethusa, and streams that pour  
Down Thymbris ! Ye will laugh with me no more.  
Woods, coppices, groves, my companions, mourn !  
He who was part of you will not return !

O Pan, Pan ! if Thou art ranging among  
Thy haunts on Mount Lycæus, and its long  
Ridges, or Mænalus, or by the tomb,  
Sky-aspiring, of Lycaonides, come !  
Arcady is thy home ; but also near  
This isle to thy heart ; and am not I dear ?  
Hither, and quick, my King ; for I draw nigh  
To Hades, Love's victim ; and when I die,  
I would Thou take my honey-breathing pipe.  
'Twill yield music Divine, touched by thy lip.

For Me—I have done with song ; let Me go,  
And ease Earth of a well of hate and woe.  
After Me may sharp thorns and brambles bear  
Violets ; daffodils crown the juniper !  
Nature may mellow ; wolf-hounds cease to crave  
Blood of their prey ; hares and gazelles be brave.  
Owls may contend with nightingales in song ;  
And joy in right replace the joy in wrong !

“ Horror for a Minstrel to feel a blight  
On Nature's kindness, and the sun's light ;  
To deem his love and music that had cost  
Himself a broken heart, had all been lost.  
No more.—In vain even, with late remorse,  
Love's Queen sought to reanimate a corse.

Fate's threads were used up. Dully though it ran,  
Styx carried to its further bank a man,  
Music's darling, whom Nymphs of stream and grove  
Had watched grow in grace, nor did disapprove.

But my theme ends. The hymn is done. All praise  
To You, Sisters, who inspired this, and lays  
Can, if Ye choose, voice, through Me, sweeter still!  
And, Friend, my thanks for bounty and good will!"

## GOATHERD.

"The lovely mouth! O Thyrsis, I would fill  
It with honey sweet as it can distil,  
And Attic figs, to keep notes strong and clear  
As cicalas' in noontide of the year.  
Take the Cup! fit that such Art should reward  
Melodies of a Heaven-inspired Bard.  
And, Kymætha, your Master! serve his board  
As you served mine. Be proud—a Bard for lord!"

*Idyll XI.*

THE CYCLOPS AND GALATEA

Love is hardest of all diseases to endure.  
Ointments, salves, and plasters aggravate ; never  
cure.

Only the Muses' medicine leaves no ill behind.  
They live uphill in quarters difficult to find ;  
But some few Doctors have knelt, pupils, at their  
feet,

And administer on due licence the receipt.

Our Sicilian Polyphemus used this way  
A specific, in early manhood to allay  
Love for Galatea, no common passion it  
That could seek expression in less than frantic fit.  
Gifts, apples, roses, were vain, bristles ev'n of hair ;  
And, a rough Cyclops, he had not been trained to  
bear.

His idea of duty had but been to keep  
A flock, and to add to the number of the sheep.  
Often now he let them straggle home while he eased  
His sore heart with song, and they scattered as they  
pleased.

Meantime, for his Galatea, he pined from morn  
With a wound in his breast ; and yet not all forlorn ;  
For, though great Aphrodite's shaft stuck in his heart,  
Somehow he had the drug, with rules to treat the  
smart.

High, where a stream oozed through the rotting salt  
seaweed,

On a rock he hymned the Nymph, who disdained  
to heed :

“ White-throated Galatea ! whiter than cream  
cheese,

More gamesome than a calf upon the verdant leas,  
Softer than a lamb, of a bloom with which grapes  
shine

Ere they are ripe to pluck from the mellowing  
vine ;

Why spurn me when I call, then haunt as kindly  
sleep

Descends, but when I wake, and would embrace,  
like sheep

At sight of a grey wolf, flee ?

Woeful, hateful change

Since your mother brought you up to our cave to  
range

My mountain for Iris flowers, with me for guide !  
You seemed not then inclined to mock me, and  
deride ;

Led me, from the first, even to plunge deep in love,  
Never thence to be free, however much I strove.

Fool I was to hope you should care for me one jot,  
Whom Nature damned by Zeus with so grotesque  
a lot.

Snub nose dips on lip ; forehead's one eye glares  
below

A thick mat that hedges, from ear to ear, the brow.  
Yet, being that I am, I graze a thousand sheep.  
Milk of the best they yield to drink, and even keep

Many cheese-baskets full, although to screen from  
harm

Through winter frosts, I house the flock within the  
farm.

Then, for you like holiday-making, I can play  
And sing—listen!—as no Cyclops besides, by day,  
Into the early night, to woo a happy dream  
For you, sweet Peach, and perhaps me too, by the  
theme.

When you tire of song, you shall have eleven  
fawns,

Silver-collared, to gambol on our forest-lawns,  
And four bear-cubs, the quaintest creatures of their  
sort ;

No pets there are that would provide you better  
sport.

So much I promise, and am certain you will find  
You are no worse for the change.

Sweet, make up your mind.

Ride hither, to Earth, Dearest, on the green sea  
wave,

And here remain. Delightful is night in my cave.  
Tapering cypresses, bays, and ivies, trees to suit  
All tastes I have, and vines as well, with luscious  
fruit.

Cold waters also that, my drink celestial, flow  
By Etna forest-clad, distilled from its white snow.  
Is it possible to prefer to joys like these  
Eternally rolling billows, and barren seas?  
Unyielding still? and is it for my tousled hair?  
These embers smoulder; speak the word; I would  
not spare



Life, to scorch myself endurable in your eyes ;  
 Yea, to loss of my one, that more than life I prize !

Woe ! that I was born with no gills at my  
 command

To dive to the depths, and kiss, if not your lips,  
 your hand !

Scorn caresses you might, but not have set at nought  
 The lilies and red-petalled poppies that I brought—  
 Giving an excuse to visit you twice ; for one  
 Blooms in winter's teeth, and the other courts the  
 sun.

But as without you I die, I have now resolved  
 To discover your way home, and have this revolved :  
 When a foreign seaman comes, I shall hear from him  
 How his like explore the Deep and will learn to swim.  
 In your halls we shall talk, and, as with skill in  
 song,

'Tis said I have the gift of a persuasive tongue,  
 You'll follow me landwards, and, like me, when I  
 mourn,

Birth and home forget, and choose never to return.  
 The rapture if you would help tend the flock, and  
 please

To milk the ewes, measure the rennet, press the  
 cheese !

I blame my mother, not you ; she must see I  
 grow

Thin and thinner day by day, note signs of my woe,  
 Yet does not intercede on my behalf, and spend  
 Either words, or device, to make you comprehend  
 That this misshapen body is not I, but part,  
 And against a gross form may be set a tender heart !

Shame ! and a mother ! I will be avenged : I vow  
I will make her think of me : and I well know how.

My head throbs—she shall see it—yes ; and both  
my feet.

She will then be pained ; and is it not very meet  
That a Mother and Child should ache in sympathy ?  
But what son ached—with love—atrociously as I ?

Peace, Cyclops, Cyclops ! your wits have all  
flown astray.

Cut shoots for the lambs : plait baskets to run the  
whey

From milk their dams offer.

With no excuse of sleep,  
You dream of a damsel whose home is in the deep,  
When Galateas full as fair, or still more fair,  
Nymphs of your own native highlands and woods,  
repair

To the forest feasts, who would joyfully invite  
Your courtship in their revels on a moonlit night.  
None of them but titter, if only you lent ear.

Just keep you to land ; you are a Personage there ! ”

So, the Cyclops, shepherding love back into line  
With his pastures, cheaply piped despair to the  
brine.

*Idyll XV.*

ADONIAZUSÆ

PRAXINOË.

“ Sit down, dear Gorgo ; you know you are late ;  
I thought you would not come, but meant to wait.”

GORG0.

“ Well, had you seen, you would wonder I’m here  
At all. Ah ! the crowd ; and everywhere  
Teams four abreast, blocking up the whole street  
And mailed boots trampling upon sandalled feet !  
’Twas brave to come ; for, Darling, I must say,  
You really do live out of the way.”

PRAXINOË.

“ My husband’s whim that we who share one heart  
Should live as far as possible apart.  
Jealous-mad on purpose he chose this den  
For dogs to bark in, not a home for men.  
Always so. If I make a friend, his joy  
Is to contrive a breach—just to annoy.”

GORG0.

“ ‘ Little pitchers have long ears ’ ; take care  
In your talking ; saw you not the child stare ? ”

PRAXINOË.

" You could not, Ducky, think I meant Papa  
By a bad man who did what vexed Mamma ? "

GORGO.

" Good Papa !

" Saints ! a sharp Babe ! Pick and choose  
Your confidences—mind your *p*'s and *q*'s ! "

PRAXINOË.

" Lately—not to be too specific—He  
Went to buy powder-and-paint stuff for me.  
Guess what it was He brought back at noon ?  
A parcel of salt, the long lazy loon ! "

GORGO.

" My Man, Diocleidas, is quite as bad  
As your Deinon ; the follies he commits ! March-  
mad !  
Yesterday he bought five fleeces—dog's hair !  
You cannot imagine the filth they were ;  
Not worth the cost of cleaning ; and the price !  
Cash burns holes in his pockets in a trice !

" But, dress ! robe, and clasped petticoat ! You  
know  
The Queen has undertaken this year's show.  
Trust Arsinoë for costliness ; none  
Do things as well ; all wealth can, will be done ! "

PRAXINOË.

“ I shall rejoice to see, and to report  
To the poor souls that cannot go to Court.”

GORGÓ.

“ Quick ; we hard-worked wives have no time to  
waste  
Holidays, like idlers who only feast.”

PRAXINOË.

“ Five minutes to wash.  
‘ Fool ! towels instead  
Of water ! Plague upon all slaves home-bred !  
Content—cats !—to lie soft !  
At last ! Pour ; stop !  
Clumsy creature ! look here ; my shift’s a sop ! ’  
Clean before Heaven ! ‘ This key fits the lock  
Of the big chest ; go, and fetch the frock.’ ”

GORGÓ.

“ Perfect, the full style ! none could have become  
You better ! and cost—made up—from the loom ? ”

PRAXINOË.

“ Ruinous ! clear eight pounds ! but I would die,  
Rather than live to walk about a guy !  
‘ Parasol, Girl—the cloak—see it hangs well.’  
‘ No, Child ! Bugbear catch you to slap and sell !  
Mamma would rather hear her Pretty squall  
Than have horse bite foot, and make Baby crawl ! ’  
‘ Play, Lyddy, with Master Zopyrion ;  
Call the dog in ; bar till the feast be done ! ’ ”

*Outside.*

" Gods! the crowd! and we expect without  
harm

To squeeze a passage through this monstrous swarm!  
My Man is fond of talking on the worth  
Of the King since his Father left this Earth—  
The change he has brought to pass from the time  
When the People was nought but human slime;  
A gang of tricksters, vain of fraud, a race  
Of cowards, assassins, all rogues, all base.  
And, pray, look at the Royal chargers! how  
Are the riders better in manners now!

' Good Sir! you are treading on me; take care!  
The bay rears, and is bolt up, paws in the air!'  
' Run, Eunoë, Impudence! or his feet  
Will spill all brains you have about the street!  
Forefeet down—how he kicks, as he whirls round,  
Resolved to stretch somebody on the ground!'

Comfort to have the Infant safe and sure  
From the risks his poor Mother must endure!"

## GORGO.

" Thank Goodness! the horsemen have gone their  
way;  
And we can go ours without more delay."

## PRAXINOË.

" I am all right now; but I never stood  
Either horse, or cold snake, from babyhood.  
So, off! the cavalry dispersed the crowd;  
Again it is gathering in a flood."

GORG0.

“ Of the Palace, Dame ? ”

OLD LADY.

“ Daughters, Yes ; and ye ?  
Why asked ye ? ”

GORG0.

“ Because we too fain would be,  
And seek means.”

OLD LADY.

“ Take as the Greeks Troy.”

GORG0.

“ And they ? ”

OLD LADY.

“ Oh, simply went-in ; and that was their way.”

GORG0.

“ Gone, with an oracle.”

PRAXINOË.

“ Bade go inside.  
'Tis like Zeus ; wooed not, but just took His Bride.”

GORG0.

“ Yes ; but how inside ? see the door ; the  
throng ! ”

PRAXINOË.

"A solid block! Yet can't go back.

Along!

Your hand, Gorgo; and, Eunoë, hold tight  
To mine; together, we will make a fight.

'Murder! my summer veil slit down—my best!'

'Kind Sir, if you would be for ever blest  
By Zeus, lift your foot off my dress!''

STRANGER.

"Truth! I

Cannot; but, Madam, all the same, I'll try."

PRAXINOË.

"This rampant mob human? I see no sign  
Of Man about it—a herd of wild swine!"

STRANGER.

"A rude tussle! but, spite of waves and blast,  
We survive, and are in our port at last!"

PRAXINOË.

"Yes, thanks to you, Sir, and to you alone!  
May Heav'n reward the pity you have shown!

'Ah! where is that unlucky Eunoë?

Being hustled—Break through! well done!

Here's she!'

Good! we're safe! 'what matters the storm outside?'  
As Bridegroom quoth to soaked friends when locked  
in with Bride!"



GORGŌ.

“ Praxinoë, the embroideries ! haste !  
Who but Gods durst wear them ? the fineness, taste ! ”

PRAXINOË.

“ Our Lady Athene ! whose brain but thine  
Could have conceived workmanship all Divine ?  
The forms that stand about, and those that move—  
Might they not think and talk, and war and love ?  
At what skill may not the Thing Man arrive !  
View Him on the silver couch ! dead ? alive ?—  
Delicate down just shading lips and cheek—  
One would not start if He began to speak !  
'Tis Adonis, imaged as till they come  
To carry him to Aphrodite's home.”

SECOND STRANGER.

“ For mercy's sake, cease your chatter, clatter !  
Tiresome turtle-doves ! still flat, still flatter ! ”

GORGŌ.

“ And who are you ? whence, please, your right  
to rate  
Syracusan ladies—tell them they prate ?  
From Corinth, like Bellerophon, we trace  
Our descent ; can you claim a nobler race ?  
Dorians, from Peloponnesus sprung—  
Why should we not employ the Doric tongue ?  
If now we fall mute, 'tis not for your airs,  
But She who sang the ' Sperchis ' dirge prepares  
To hymn ' Adonis ' ; and 'tis not worth while  
At one note's loss to fling back mud of Nile ! ”

## PRIMA DONNA.

“ Ah! dolorous time! the mistress of Love’s  
whole Art

To be sickening of a wound from her own dart;  
Without finding aught of relief there, to frequent  
Golgos, Idalium, Erix’s steep ascent;  
To scold her Nymphs for thinking she could be  
consoled

By tossing hearts to and fro, as if toys of gold;  
Till the long ordeal of the creeping year was done,  
And the still Hours led a Ghost up from Acheron.  
Dear Hours, how ye, slowest of all the Blest to  
move

For the young listening for footsteps that they  
love,

Yet come at last with a gift; ev’n to Mortals dead,  
As to our Adonis here on his silver bed;  
As to Gods—our Cypris—granted, with Him from  
Hell—

Rising and setting immortality—to dwell;  
As to Berenice, raised to the skies a star,  
For beauty, by Cypris too, and glittering far;  
While Arsinoë, in her gratitude for this  
Rescue of a Mother from death, and boon of bliss,  
Has tolled a world for art and charm to overwhelm  
A Goddess and her Love with worship by a realm.  
Lo! the season’s fruits, ripest wood and orchard  
bear,

Dainty herbs, the choicest cunning gardeners rear,  
And, on moss soft as velvet, silver baskets hold,  
With myrrh breathing fragrance from caskets of  
pure gold.

Honey cakes, flow'rs, fine meal, as for Kings, are  
dressed,

And birds and beasts moulded, as to amuse the Guest.  
Verdant bowers roofed thick by anise-boughs invite  
To enter and repose in a caressing night.

Cupids chase one another in among the trees ;  
And nightingales sing and swing to the music of  
the breeze.

Look ! the ebony, the gold, and the princely boy  
Twin eagles have clutched from his Palace home in  
Troy !

And the heaped-up coverlets, softer they than sleep,  
Whether from Miletus, or from Samian sheep ;  
Sufficing, either, for the couches, we see, dressed  
For Aphrodite and her Spouse to take their rest.  
Not more than full nineteen years does the bride-  
groom count ;

And his kisses, though down about his lips may  
mount,

Are shy and tender, learning passion from a love  
That restores to him the warmth of a sun above.

So, to both sweet slumber ! till dew rise, when  
once more

We shall be here to bear the fair Dead to the shore.  
There, locks and robes loose, as we take our Dear  
along

Sad pleasure, glad return, will pledge—one blending  
song :

' Mortals have ascended from Earth to Heaven ;  
none

Have tasted of Earth and Heav'n both, save Thee  
alone.

Atreides reigned, Ajax was huge, body, wrath, hate ;  
 Hector was chief of sons, a score, and of his State ;  
 There was Patroclus ; there was Pyrrhus, without  
 whom

Ilium, 'twas pronounced, must have escaped her  
 doom ;

Pelops' line, Deucalion's make, Thebes's Kings,  
 Achieved some high, and suffered many evil, things ;  
 Of Lapithæ, Argos-founders, Pelasgi old,  
 Nothing less might have, save for memory's lapse,  
 been told—

But of others than Adonis can it be said,  
 That they re-lived from being dead among the dead ?  
 Now, Good-bye, our Fairest, Dearest ! and may  
 good cheer

Be Thine where Thou goest, and follow Thee next  
 year !

With a blessing Thou cam'st, and leav'st a void at  
 heart

Thou must return to fill, beautiful that Thou art ! ' ' "

GORGON.

" Clever Thing ! good luck hers to have been  
 born

With wits ! and for song—an amazing turn !

But I'm late ! and a fasting husband ! what,  
 When Diocleidas happens to be that !  
 Hungry, He'd snap off anybody's head.  
 Beware of wild beasts when they're not full fed ! ' ' "

" However, I've viewed Adonis ; the while  
 Till he return I'll live upon his smile ! ' ' "

*Idyll XXIV.*

THE INFANT HERACLES

Alcmena, Amphitryon's Wife, had washed and fed,  
And put Babes Heracles and Iphicles to bed.

Heracles, ten months old, was elder by one night ;  
And the bed a shield, Amphitryon's spoil in fight.  
The Mother, stroking the two darling heads, thus  
spake :

" Sleep, my children, a sweet sleep, and refreshed  
awake ;

Brethren, Mother's life, blest be your bed ! and  
morn's rise—

May it unseal two happy pairs of baby eyes ! "

Murmuring her Good-Night, she rocked the mighty  
shield ;

And sleep, as she prayed and rocked, settled on  
each child.

But when at midnight, turning, the Great Bear  
inclines

To set, and its shoulder against Orion shines,

Two huge Serpents stole thither, shunning to be  
seen,

Dread monsters, coil on coil, gleaming steel-blue  
sheen.

They forced, like the gradual roll of Ocean's tide,

The hollow door-posts of the chamber to gape wide,—

Bribed tools they of schemes and spite of a vengeful  
Wife

To crush a rival's spawn, and grind it out of life !  
At full length the pair grovelled in the dust along ;  
Baleful fire flamed from their eyes, venom spat  
each tongue.

Nor, though the fell mouths watered as savouring  
prey,

Zeus intervened—His blood must find itself a way !  
Still, His heart beat there ; and each such heart-beat  
is light ;

So in the room was something, neither day, nor  
night,

That aroused the two Babes. Iphicles, with a wild  
Scream at sight of the fangs gloating over the shield,  
Wrenched the coverlet off, racking his infant brain  
How to tumble himself down, and cheat death, in  
vain.

His twin spurned flight ; and just below where  
gullets gasped,

Slavering poison—by Gods as men dreaded—grasped,  
Each hand, a windpipe, careless that the coils twined  
round

His body, so long as in his grip they as fast unwound.  
No cry he raised, none more of triumph than dismay.  
Tearless, fearless, two stark dragons on him, he lay !

Meanwhile Alcmena had awakened Amphytrion :  
“ Haste ! I tremble ; wait not to put your sandals  
on.

Hark ! 'tis Iphicles ; there is terror in his cries ;  
As you love me, up, Dearest ! brush sleep from  
your eyes ;

Still it is early night ; the dawn is long away ;  
Yet, look, the walls are visible, though hours off  
day."

He leaped forth at the call, stretching up—the first  
thought—

His hand to pull the sword down-hanging, richly  
wrought,

In its sheath of black lotus-wood, above the bed ;  
When, suddenly, the radiance ceased, and, instead,  
Night resumed, with darkness and silence, as before,  
Except, from the slaves' quarters, echoed their deep  
snore.

" Lights ! " shouted Amphytryon : " much-enduring  
bolts ;

Strike sparks from the embers ; drive fast home the  
doors' bolts ! "

The whole household stirred ; and, throughout,  
the mansion blazed

With lamplight.

But oh ! the hurricane that was raised,  
The frenzy ! when, lo ! the Babe in each clenched  
soft fist

Held—choked the grinning jaws—a stone-dead  
noisome beast !

His own sole care being, with bubbling bursts of joy,  
Gurgles of merriment, as one's with a new toy,  
To toil on—the rest at gaze shuddering—and drag  
The coils, for his sire to play with fangs and poison  
bag.

Tired at last he dropped asleep, and was put to rest.  
Tucked up warm, he slumbered—a young bird in  
its nest

Gladly Amphitryon sought for himself the same  
Relief, and dreamt happy dreams until morning  
came.

Iphicles, shuddering, passionately distressed,  
Alcmena sought to comfort, fondling on her breast.

Long she lay awake ; and, when other inmates  
slept,

Pondering night's marvels, an anxious vigil kept ;  
Then, at cockcrow, she told Tiresias the tale,  
Imploring of him the truth, whether good or bale :  
“ For none human ward off, when spun the Fates’  
Decree !

Much wisdom though Thou hast, this, Prophet,  
learn of Me ! ”

“ Courage, Grandchild of Perseus,” the blind Seer  
replied :

“ Women’s theme, as, spinning, they sing at eventide,  
Will be ‘ Alcmena ’ ; name for Argos to adore !  
Yea, by the light that visits my dead orbs no more,  
Glory in this Babe, that, such as he is, thy son,  
He will grow a man as, infant, he has begun.  
Heir he to a mortal’s strength of muscles, and heart  
Within them, a God’s, that shall play an earthly  
part.

Be content with his sojourn here that it will prove  
How all Earth’s scourges bow to Heaven’s race  
above ;

For though he must twelve ruthless ordeals undergo,  
And be purged by fire first of mortal flesh Below,  
Olympus is his birthright ; he shall share its feasts,  
Even ally with Gods that hired sly, felon beasts  
To rend his baby limbs.



But while he labours here,  
The name ' Heracles ' will be one of love and fear,  
The shield he lies in be for weak and the oppressed  
A cradle where they too may sleep, and take their  
rest,  
The dream-smile upon his lips strengthen to a charm  
To nerve righteous wrath, seal meekness against  
harm ;  
And the shade of the lion skin that he shall wear,  
Falling on a kid, warn wolves, wild or human, to  
forbear ! ”

*Idyll XXVIII.*

AN IVORY DISTAFF

Just a distaff! Athene's boon to women. And I  
would  
Mine to Theugenis in Miletus might prove as good!  
I have a Bard's second sight; you shall see you  
need not fear,  
Distaff, to fare less gently in your treatment there  
than here.  
Lo! your new mistress, before a green, tender  
reed-wreathed Shrine,  
In stately Miletus, praying the Queen of Love Divine  
To calm the seas for one bound from Syracuse to  
embrace  
Nicias, scion and heir of each harmonious Grace.  
Next, yourself—envy I not, clasped by two white  
arms, and kissed  
By rosiest lips?—was ever distaff as you so blest?—  
Yes, and joy again, as, amid her troop of laughing  
girls,  
Pressed by your Lady's dainty ankle, your wheel  
whirring, twirls,  
Turning the soft fleeces from the ewes twice shorn,  
year by year,  
Into warm cloth for men, delicate gauze for women's  
wear.

I rejoice that you whom choice craftsmen of Sicily  
wrought,  
Will serve folk, not pithless and idle, but of nerve  
and thought ;  
That, as your lot was to exchange the country of  
your birth,  
It is to a City as pleasant as there is on Earth.  
I shall muse on you, when I drift, the sport of any  
wind,  
As housing with a good and wise healer of human-  
kind ;  
Nor then only, but when the sun sets, and night  
closes in,  
And you, with sweet Theugenis, your course of eve  
begin,  
Perhaps, it will chance that She may bethink her  
of a song,  
Even of its Minstrel, as the melody rolls along.  
Although wild waters roar between us, I shall see  
and hear,  
As her eyes fall on my poor Gift, wet, may be, with  
one tear.  
Gifts, and Gifts ! some worthless ; some, that a  
life cannot repay !  
And the measure ? In Heav'n or Hell alone the  
scales to weigh !



**BION  
AND  
MOSCHUS**



## BION AND MOSCHUS

By a strange coincidence Time has spared us one fine poem of each, and, similarly, for each, a delightful accompaniment of gaiety. Slight as are Bion's "Innocent Boyhood" and "Led Astray," they are excellent in ease and point. But more substantial matter has survived than these airy trifles for belief in their author's poetic power. The "Epitaph on Adonis" gathers together the ragged clues of a tangled legend into a coherent whole. It has real melody. Though the sentiment is strained, it stands out amid all that chaos of crazy liturgies.

For serious verse Moschus compares with Bion's "Adonis" in his elegy on Bion himself. In poetic literature it ranks deservedly high. My attempt at a version indicates at least that it contains noble thoughts on a dead master's genius. It is not entirely my fault if it be judged that the dirge at times labours. May I be allowed, on the other hand, to hope that the translation of the famous "Hue and Cry" does not obscure overmuch the brilliancy of a marvellous inspiration of humour!

Farewell to the Pair! and alas that one headstone should suffice for the monument of two such as the scanty remains prove these to have been! Who can

credit such a double paradox as that the few pieces in existence, though inclusive of the remarkable half dozen I have selected, were the whole on which fervent contemporary admiration of the couple rested !



ADONIS

Adonis the Beautiful is dead ! weep,  
Loves ! and Thou, Aphrodite, off with sleep !  
Rend thy sapphire raiment, beat thy white breast ;  
Up, and to the heights, in black sackcloth dressed.  
Quick ! Thou wilt find him in the moaning wood,  
Dear Life passing in the gored thigh's dark blood.  
Ah ! that the light fading in the glazed eyes  
Will not reflect thine on him as he dies,  
Or tell him that immortal passion, flouting Death,  
still sips  
The love he can no longer savour on his pale, cold  
lips !

Who, what laments him not ? Every hound  
Whimpers, knowing him dead ; the Nymphs around  
Chant dirges, sing his praises. But no smart  
Equals the ache in Aphrodite's heart.  
Hair loosed, unkempt, about the brakes, forlorn  
She wanders barefoot, by the brambles torn.  
See her, traceable by the bloodstains, rove ;  
Hark ! she calls through the glades on her lost love !  
And was this our Queen Cypris of graces Divinely  
rare,  
Whose sole pride and conceit it is to be no longer  
fair ?

All Nature mourns, forests of oak, and hills,  
Broad rivers, and plains, dancing mountain rills.  
Earth's bosom from the blood the boar's tusk  
shed

Paints the varied blossoms that it sends forth red ;  
As Cytherea cries her Darling's name,  
Echo, catching the grief, returns the same.  
If spirits could but have exchanged for once,  
And his have reflected hers in response,  
How eagerly would She have absorbed him within  
her soul,  
Making of one last kiss from a fountain of love—  
the whole !

Mad ; and She knows it : " Be left enough breath  
To blow passion hot in the frost of death !  
Doomed thou wert, and hast flitted to Styx's shore,  
Whence its grim King releases souls no more.  
Or its Queen. Can I vie with her in might ?  
If in life—in death all is hers by right.  
Aught lovely. And Adonis, who was Mine—  
Free Adonis ? I doubt thee, Proserpine !  
Fled as a shadow, faded as a vision of the night—  
Fool to have fancied sheer longing could bring thee  
back to light ! "

Dead ! Yet beauty is not disdained by Death ;  
And Death shall yield the dead no loveless wreath.  
From tears of Cypris the wind-flower grows ;  
Of blood of Adonis is born the rose.  
Back ; none dying awaits Thee in the glade  
Adonis on thy bed of leaves is laid.

Oftentimes hast Thou found him there asleep ;  
View him lying dead ; and Thou wilt not weep.  
Hadst never seen him living—never, until life had  
fled—

Thou wouldst have cast off Immortality to be his,  
Dead !

Put on him soft apparel, wherein blest  
With beauty like to his are wont to rest.  
Heap crowns, flowers of all hues, though they die,  
When they find he is dead, in sympathy.  
Match his breath—scents inestimably rare,  
That vainly burn, and expire in despair.  
Train the young Loves—rather than sharpen darts  
Upon the whetstone of poor, human hearts—  
To loose sandals, though from dead feet, bathe, from  
gold ewers, the wound,  
With wings whisp'ring to marble brows, persuade  
sleep deep and sound.

Yes ; he is dead ; and yet too sweet and fair  
For the Underworld to hope to keep him there.  
Weep, Loves ; and, Hymenæus, as is meet,  
In place of wreaths and minstrelsy to greet  
Happy brides and bridegrooms, bid Hymen wring  
Hands, and chant a funeral dirge, not sing  
Marriage hymns, while Graces' and Muses' cry  
On their Dear to return brings no reply.—

Then, suddenly, the Universe ceases from grief ;  
life's tide  
Rises, ebbs, as if Adonis had ne'er been loved, or  
died.

Year by year, far into the past, a strange  
Progress across Time's stage this interchange  
Of common life and tragedy Divine.  
Yearly a curtain lifts ; and lo ! a line  
Of Beings, their beauty wonderful, come  
From afar, as to their own rightful home.  
Though what is there that might not well have been  
As is acted and painted on the scene ?  
Do ye murmur : " Death would have quenched love  
in a Goddess." Nay ;  
Love in an Immortal breast would, with death,  
have burned for aye !

More than first thrill, ev'n conquest of disdain,  
Wouldst not Thou, Queen Cypris, have prized the  
pain,  
A new sense, the agony in the wood  
Thou roamedst, robe purpled with the dear blood—  
Ecstasy of pure grief—beyond all charms  
In having smiled Adonis to thy arms,  
The feeling that death had sealed him thy own—  
Life half ransomed—ne'er payable the loan !  
So, mayst Thou count the days, our Queen, when  
Thou shalt reap the cost  
And price of kissing Adonis back to be loved—and  
lost !

## INNOCENT BOYHOOD

With rods, a parcel, limed to fish the air,  
Picked to match bushes as if they grew there,  
A youthful fowler had sought out a spot  
Whither were used his winged prey to repair.

Kind Chance ! on a box-tree in a green grove,  
Lo ! one, big, plump, as cooks and sportsmen love !  
He, mere slip of a boy, tried all his arts  
The strange fowl's curiosity to move.

All in vain. " So insensible ! and yet  
Handsome ! " He threw his rods down in a pet,  
Fingers itching to feel the creature's throat,  
Should he tangle it in a common net !

Finding an old man who taught him the skill,  
He asked him to visit the copse. There still  
Perched our fine quarry, that, after one glance  
At greybeard, nought vouchsafed for good or ill.

" Oho ! " sniggered the countryman. " Take care  
To give that a wide berth ; they who wise are  
Flee as poison the wicked bird ; try not  
To catch it ; and, grown man, ev'n more beware !

Now, it affects to despise ; perhaps, may ;  
Sure, if caged, though seeming content to stay,

It will have the laugh, simple soul, on you,  
And force the barred door open any day.

As it is, thank your stars you are not Man,  
And enjoy your liberty while you can.

You'll know when the reprieve is up ; for it  
That shunned pursuit when you, poor child, began,

Will of a sudden either forge or feign  
An invitation, whence proceed to gain

Easy footing upon a silly head,  
And quickly peck out aught there is of brain ! ”

LED ASTRAY

As I slept, Aphrodite, leading young  
Cupid, louting low, by her hand along,  
    Prayed me : “ Dear Herdsman, out of love for me  
Please, teach Baby your pretty trick of song ! ”

That was all ; and away the Great Queen went.  
Youth I, thinking She a sound training meant,  
    Prepared to ground the urchin in my craft,  
Supposing such was the child’s honest bent.

So, asleep, I showed how quite natural  
’Twas that Pan, Pallas, Hermes, Phœbus, all,  
    Devised instruments to exalt our Art,  
Till out of them was born the Pastoral ;—

Each being just itself, His or Her own ;  
Whether stringed, or one way or other blown ;  
    Cross-flute, and nondescript, lyre, and guitar ;—  
Better to me dreaming than waking known.

Pity, my pupil listened not ;—meanwhile  
He plotted the inveigling me to smile,  
    By humming loose ballads, and scandal-talk,  
Graceless Boy ! of his Mother in her Isle.

Nor this the worst calamity, to find  
That no rudiments had lodged in his mind ;

Or ev'n that mine had lost all it had stored.—  
But oh ! the lewd airs there, instead, enshrined !



ON BION

Dorian Sea, and brooks, and rivers, wail !  
Moan follow moan throughout each sylvan dale !  
Take up the mourning, groves ! roses, exhale  
Your lives, a cloud of fragrance on the gale,  
While windflowers droop in cadence, and " Ai,"  
    " Ai,"

Whisper clustered hyacinths—sigh on sigh.  
Lament, nightingales : " Bion on his deathbed lies,  
And Doric minstrelsy ceases with him, and dies ! "

On thy banks, Arethusa, he would play,  
And thou murmur an answer to the lay.  
No more he pipes, beneath the oaks reclined ;  
Remembers not us he has left behind.  
But we forget not ; nor mortals alone  
Will miss him from the haunts whence he is gone ;  
Phœbus, Pan, Satyrs, Sprites of garden, wood, heath,  
    spring,  
Crave for the melodies that he was wont to sing.

A joy has faded from off the Earth. Fruit,  
Honey, flowers, have lost their sweetness ; mute  
Morn's gaiety ; only birds sing that bring  
A toll of sadness to the sorrowing.

His pipe stays silent since the Minstrel's death,  
None less than Pan dares stir it with his breath  
Echo would serve, if Pan's, no meaner lips. Until  
His peer shall call, her cave repeats his music still.

Galatea pines for his song, her charm of yore,  
When for its sake she paced the desert shore.  
If the Nymph comes now, it is that she leads,  
Replacing him, his kine to graze the meads.  
What boots her care?—affection he had earned,  
The flame with which so many maidens burned,  
Cupids weeping with drooping wings about the  
tomb,  
Her kiss though sweet as paid Adonis for his  
doom.

Alas! River Meles, in bygone years  
Stream that thy Homer's death turned to floods of  
tears,  
Now forced again thy mourning to renew  
For a second countryman, bard as true—  
Although chanting not of Gods, Kings in arms,  
But herds, Pan's pipe, and Aphrodite's charms—  
And club sorrow with others than those who drink  
the same air;  
For where'er the Muses are honoured, grief is  
there!

Will Ascrea, chill to Hesiod, forget  
Bion, or Hylæ Pindar so regret?  
Lesbos, Ceos, may keep, each isle, a tear  
For Alcæus, Simonides; Bion here

Will live yet there ; rather than miss one page,  
Paros blots all Archilochus's "rage,"  
Mitylene begs from its Sappho's wreaths, to save  
Violets to heap on a Sicilian grave.

Nor shall due Pastoral offerings fail.  
From Samos will Sicelidas bewail  
A famous brother in our Art ; in Crete  
Lycidas, better used to laugh, will greet ;  
Philetas, of Cos—many themes, one lyre—  
And our Theocritus, will join the quire.  
I too claim to be of mourners around the bier—  
Nought else for me, but in Doric song I am  
    heir !

Winter frosts work havoc in gardens, kill  
The pale-green parsley, and crisp, sturdy dill ;  
But in Spring they re-live, and bloom ; the  
    wise,  
Great, valiant, once in earth, sleep, never rise.  
And, Bion, that thou, thy eloquent tongue,  
Should, before Nature willed, by felon wrong,  
Have been reft from air, light, music, locked, blind  
    and dumb,  
Though not unavenged, in an ever silent tomb !

I fear ; but I feel not, cannot believe !  
Thou drink of Lethe ?

                                No ; thou wilt receive  
Command to visit Pluto's Court, and sing  
Some madrigal before the Queen and King

Of Sicily She, the Ægean shore,  
Shall dream, in Doric, be a maid once more.  
For a lute's air She gave Orpheus his bride, and  
will  
Restore thee for as sweet Pastorals to thy hill.

Ah ! that I might but hear thee !

For that end,  
As Heracles, Odysseus, I'd descend  
To Hades, though no God, or Hero I,  
The music of my humble pipe to try.  
What if it were granted me to return,  
As to Heracles, with the friend I mourn !  
Ev'n though prisoned there, the Spirit-world would  
not be  
So unneighbourly as is this Earth wanting thee !

HUE AND CRY!

“ ‘ Oyez !

Good People ! Run away !  
Lost at the Three-cross-roads ! a stray ! ’  
It is my Cupid !

None shall be  
Without a due reward from me.  
For ‘ seeing ’ the Child—Just for this  
A fond Mother offers a kiss !  
But, pray, Sirs, be ye careful what  
Ye look for ; Mine’s no common brat ;  
Very notable : take a batch,  
A score ; you would not find his match  
Complexion ? not your milky-white,  
But as it had drunk red-hot light.  
Keen eyes, gimlets to pierce inside,  
And blaze so ! brain can nothing hide !  
Sweet chatter, with purpose unkind ;  
Likeness none between tongue and mind.  
Honey even to an excess ;  
After-taste gall and bitterness.—  
For my Babe, it must be confessed,  
In a temper is a wild beast.  
Pity too—though can it surprise,  
Such sharp wits ?—that he’s apt at lies ;

That sauce goes with his curly hair,  
And sports he favours cruel are.  
Soft, little hands, and dimpled each !  
That can Styx and King Pluto reach  
Naked Innocent ! who has read  
That dark, impenetrable head ?  
' Boast you're safe, as he spends the day  
With a neighbour over the way ? '  
Delphic bird he, and skewers two hearts  
At one flight in several parts.  
Yes ; with bow so small, shaft much less,  
Yet can wound in the halls of Bliss  
From the gold quiver at his back.  
Matricide ! gives Mamma the rack.  
In a freak of insolent fun,  
Fires ev'n the Palace of the Sun.

Now, anyone who hears my child  
Is somewhat more than common wild,  
Yet would earn a Mother's regard,  
And a hope of special reward,  
By making little Mischief come  
Back to the shelter of a home,  
Had best take warning—tie him fast,  
When he drops on the Boy at last.  
Cunning young rascal, he will try  
To win compassion by some lie—  
Say he was whipt—and I can swear,  
Richly deserved it if he were—  
Resort to tears ; squeeze out a few—  
Each one a pearl of dawn-touched dew—  
Or shoot—a serpent to beguile—  
From his artillery a smile ;

Yea, purse a pair of rosy lips  
To kiss—poison to him who sips!  
But suppose—miracles—the Brave,  
With captive, trussed fowlwise, to have  
Passed ordeals of kiss, smile, and tear,  
What if my Imp, how like the Dear!  
Should, final stake, as knowing well  
They had been dipped in flame of Hell,  
Pledge to his captor bow and darts—  
With royal patent to break hearts—  
And if, as any, offered this,  
Would accept, and plunge straight in Dis—  
How shall I ever catch, alas!  
Such an Infant as never was? ”





**APOLLONIUS RHODIUS**



## APOLLONIUS RHODIUS

APOLLONIUS was of Alexandria, but passed several years in Rhodes, whence he took a name. He was not of or from Sicily, and pretends not to play on Pan's pipes. Working up-hill at first, against fashionable literary prejudices in Egypt, finally even there he won his way. It was a brave thing to choose a theme which was Pindar's, and he discovered a track without jostling. The Greek masters showed the working of passions chiefly by deeds done Apollonius so far is modern; he anatomizes his Medea to indicate how The Fleece was won. The processes of examining and weighing emotions in a girl's love-stricken heart, though almost cruel, are vivid and artistic. The portion I have rendered exemplifies the power.

In agreement with the Alexandrian character in Greek literature, the main aim was to interest in the mechanism of an individual mind or minds. In earlier Greek that was not the writer's motive, though it was an effect. The direct intention was to glorify a hero, or a country. If emphasis was laid on especial tenets or propensities, it was to exalt a God or Goddess. An Alexandrine chose a tradition or adventure, as a novelist now, because he saw his way to work it into a plot. Apollonius took the

Argonauts less on their own account than for Medea's sake. Aware as he certainly was of the heroic individualities of the men, he had in Colchis no use for them, and for all essential purposes dispenses with all but their chief. Medea is his heroine. His Poem's distinctive merit is the subtlety with which her character develops itself according to the necessities of the story. That is still just so far as his scope requires. It is a most elaborate study of a love-sick girl distracted between affections, duties as she held, originally, to playmates of her blood, next, to her father, then, after an agonizing struggle, to her love. All through, besides, we have to remember she was, to begin, an unconscious tool in Queen Hera's and Athene's design for the success of the ship. It is a new reading of the future terrible, appalling Enchantress's passions.

The scenic dressing is admirable. Daily life, though without Sicilian shepherds and herdsmen, makes a good background. Nowhere, again, has the Love-God been more charmingly depicted with all his boyish freakishness. Greatness is not after the manner of Apollonius; but there is no better playing at the Epic in miniature. Among votaries of romantic poetry, "The Argonauts" has remained in favour. So fine a student of letters as Charles James Fox loved it.

## THE ARGONAUTS

Rhodian Apollonius has told  
That the Argonauts won the Fleece of Gold.  
Others had sung already how they fared  
In the brave enterprise that Jason dared.  
Thus, Pindar has done it in a great Hymn  
Beside which later lights may well burn dim  
From a Silver Age; and yet he of Rhodes  
Has treated a love's fits, spasms, gusts, and goads  
Not unequally.

                    Upon her way east,  
The Argo, to allow her oarsmen rest,  
Moored at the fierce-vulture-haunted isle—  
Aretias its name. After a while  
Four shipwrecked men joined them. Fleeing from  
Greece,  
Phrixus, on his ram of the golden fleece,  
Was welcomed in Colchis. King Æëtes, young,  
And finding his guest all that bards have sung,  
Gave him Chalciopé, his child, for wife;  
And they dwelt, as one household, friends for life.  
Phrixus, leaving children, died in old age.  
Four sons of his sought a Greek heritage;  
But now, cast ashore, lost the wish to roam,  
And prayed a passage by the Argo home.

Jason, a kinsman, agreed ; and his aim  
Æëtes learned from them ; why Argo came.  
Never had they suspected that the King  
So loved the Fleece as to lust for the Thing ;  
That he meant by spells the Sun his Sire taught,  
With fresh a younger daughter's studies wrought,  
To pervert a Trust, as he feigned to hold  
His tenure, into lordship of the gold.  
The wrath he showed warned the crew to beware  
Both of rude force and of treacherous snare.

Human hearts hide not from Heavenly eyes.  
Gods saw the King would use craft to surprise  
Guileless Heroes ; only the wiles of love  
Might resist enchantments that he could move.  
Hera and Athena gained the consent  
Of Aphrodite ; Cupid's bow was lent,  
Almost with gratitude. A lively scene  
Paints how in the orchard of Zeus, the Queen  
Of Cyprus found her Boy playing gold dice,  
And cheating Ganymede ; how in a trice  
The Babe's last two were added to the rest  
Which Love held in a clenched fist to his breast.  
Sulking at a burst of loud cackle, stole  
Off the ground in dudgeon the spoilt pet fool,  
When Aphrodite entered. As She came,  
A glance, and She caught the trick of Love's  
game ;  
Though the admiring tone in which She cried :  
" Shame, Knave ! " savoured less of her wrath than  
pride.

Piously he vowed he'd without delay  
Inflame a maid ; for him a holiday,

With, or without the promise of a ball—  
“ Plaything of Grandsire Zeus ; pictures o’er all ;  
For flight, would mount up, up, ever so far,  
You’d be thought to have got hold of a star ! ”  
Better, he pleads, give now ; “ touch of the prize  
Would surely have made gimlets of his eyes.  
But sooner off, sooner back ” ; so, arrayed  
With quiver and bow, in hot haste he made,  
Having free exit and entrance by birth,  
Instant plunge through Heaven’s gates upon Earth.

No grander Palace than Aia’s ; a God,  
Hephæstus, built it, fair and strong abode  
For the son of Helios, to requite  
The cripple’s rescue from a Giant’s might.  
A garden bloomed outside, with promise large  
Of grapes and flowers ; and along its marge  
Babbled from founts that severally rolled,  
Warm as the Pleiads set, as they rose, cold,  
Jets, milk, wine, water, sweet oil, wondrous art,  
Though not more than o’erflowed every part.  
Round an inner Court lofty buildings stood,  
Lodgings for a proud King, and Royal blood,  
With slaves many. Æëtes dwelt in one,  
And his Queen ; in another, next, his son,  
Apsyrtus. Others housed Chalciope,  
With her sons by Phrixus, just back from sea,  
And Medea—of such awe for her Shrine  
That few marked charms, though human, half Divine !  
Scarce herself conscious. From when rose the sun  
She served Hekate till day’s course was run.  
Only now Hera stayed her for the Plot’s sake,  
That Cupid’s arrow might its due course take.

Already Jason, holding in his hand,  
Pledge of his amity, a Herald's wand,  
Attended, with five more, prepared to meet,  
And settle points at issue without heat.  
To avoid street encounters, Hera cast  
A thick mist o'er the route as the Greeks passed ;  
But it cleared.

As Cupid brushed through the crowd,  
Breasts panted, eyes gleamed, women sighed  
aloud.

Twisting-in, close by Jason, on the string,  
Tight-strained, he fitted a shaft. On the wing  
It whirred ; and with a jeer and laugh, pleased well—  
Though the rights of his work he could not tell—  
At the girl's dumb surprise, the Imp fell back  
From Hall and throng, leaving her on the rack.  
He had performed his task, earned his reward ;  
So he handled the plaything, nought he cared !

A storm ! On the sons of Phrixus dashed first  
The rage of the King ; he had been athirst  
To slay arch traitors. Affinity tied  
Him. But Jason—his pleas he turned aside,  
For his conscience' sake, by his "sacred Trust."  
His own worth he could prove ; successors must :  
"Yoke the Bulls ; face the Dragon ; take the  
Fleece ;

And restore it triumphantly to Greece !"  
Thwart his magic ? Medea's ? How suppose  
Hers was to be a weapon of his foes ?

Yes ; the arrow — a flame — clove the Maid's  
heart—  
The melting, vibrating, bitter, sweet smart !



A seamstress lets one spark touch ; due delay—  
Fire will warm her to work by break of day—  
And the heaped brushwood is a blaze ! So, now,  
A pure, virgin soul changed to red-hot tow.  
Nor knows she to what lengths the fire may spread.  
She loved ; was not cause enough therein for dread ?  
Enough of pain, glancing beside her veil,  
To count the beatings of her heart, to feel  
Herself in bonds, a drawn, flickering shade,  
Obliged to tread his track, each step he made ?  
When, on her Sire's fury at the demand  
For return of the Fleece to its own land,  
She sought the Women's quarters with the rest,  
The longing swelled, with absence, in her breast.  
Agony—how be sure fancy saw true ?  
That memory indeed gave him to view,  
Recalled how he rose, and resumed his seat,  
Attuned the words he uttered, honey-sweet ?  
Pride to love such ! But the pits in his path ;  
Deadliest dug by the King's subtle wrath !  
Thinking, she grieved as for one on his bier ;  
And down a cheek rolled an eloquent tear.  
Cruel the contest that she had to wage,  
Girlish shame at an all unsought love's rage.  
Worn out at last she slept, and a kind dream  
Bade believe Jason had not, as would seem,  
Voyaged to regain the Fleece, but was come  
To woo her to reign, Queen, with him at home.  
Awake, her brain toiled not the less to save  
The man she adored from an open grave.  
Thrice she started for Chalciope's room ;  
Would promise to avert the Stranger's doom ;

And avow her love?—thrice turned!—Ah that  
would

Her sister plead with her the claims of  
blood!

Finally, a slave, witnessing the scene,  
Informed Chalciope. As might have been,  
She, hoping family affection wrought  
With a young soul, ran wildly, and besought  
Her magic's aid to save youths who had grown  
From infancy as brethren of her own.

Modesty screened, Medea vowed a "charm"  
That would ensure her playmates against harm.

It was night. Mariners steered by the Bear  
And Orion. Wayfarers questioned where  
They should lodge. A short oblivion hid  
From themselves the mothers of children dead.  
No dog barked. It was the halt for life's rush  
To suspend its hammer in air, and hush.  
But Medea slept not, heart, brain; and brief,  
Spite of her sister's error, the relief:

"Free to work my magic. And at what cost?  
Faith to a sire broken; his in me lost.

Oh that Artemis had shot from Above,  
Spared me the torture of this cruel love!  
Did death from disease ever match love's dart  
Eating its way remorseless through a heart?  
I could die now—shall I? And let him die?  
Never! First, he must win through me, though I  
Hang myself from a beam, or drink a drug  
From the casket that on my knees I hug—  
To be cited by women a disgrace,  
A traitress to King, Father, Sex, and Race!"

Even the balance betwixt death and life ;  
Long the scales quivered in the doubtful strife.  
The casket was stocked both to cure and kill.  
She touched a poison ; would at last she will  
To swallow—all but had resolved—when, lo !  
“ Hell ! ” and on her cheeks she felt youth, health,  
    blow.

Never had Earth's beauty thus filled her eyes,  
Mere life revealed its infinite surprise.  
The bright dawn called on her to play ; the sun  
Seemed specially for her behoof to run.  
And, by her—such Hera's power Divine—  
Jason ! For Him home, honour, all, resign !  
Haste, full day, that she might her Hero greet ;  
Magic with magic, with love malice meet !

No more ado ! dismissing scruples, care,  
Penitence, she dressed her loosed, golden hair,  
Bathed tear-stained cheeks, on her skin sweet balms  
    shed,

Donned a fair robe, threw a veil o'er her head.  
While her twelve young damsels prepared the car,  
Herself chose enchantments for love and war.  
Chief, the salve Promethean, juice a moor  
On Caucasus yields, fed by Titan gore.  
Only at darkest night may the strange root  
By grace of mighty Hekate be cut.  
Earth quakes—as if from one crucified still,  
Hark groans ; the martyr feels the eagle's bill !  
Two girls sat with her ; the rest ran. She took  
Her way through the Town ; men forbore to look  
The Princess in the face. Nearing the Fane,  
She halted upon a flowery plain,

And confiding to the suite's faith her tryst,  
Awaited in hope, dread, as in a mist.

Nor failed Jason; and—Hera's grace, Heav'n's  
Queen—

Argo held none, God-born, his peer in mien.  
For the Maid 'twas as Sirius might raise  
His orb how fair! to flocks a pest that gaze!  
Silent the pair. So stand tall Pines, nor move;  
Just a breeze, and how talkative the grove!  
His wish he told; if granted: "Take his word;  
Her name should be glorified by his sword;  
Women, looking vainly for Argo now,  
Shall know, when She comes, that the cause is  
Thou!"

Incapable of speech, she showed the Charm  
With a smile; his eyes flashed love. Thereat warm  
Grew hearts, melting, as half resists, half woos  
Dew rays of dawn in petals of a rose.  
Few the words that passed; the courtship was done  
More by stolen glances than talk alone.  
Not so when the Priestess, Enchantress spoke;  
A Pow'r then she, for Heroes to invoke.  
Then, let him muse on syllables of speech;  
Certain death the penalty of a breach.  
Safety for a day's life but thus ensured;  
Freedom thus to act as he pleased secured.  
Bolder, for it was her last hope, she waxed;  
Grasping his right hand, and weeping, she taxed  
Him with schemes to desert his guardian: "Where,  
Say, is thy home?" and when he named it: "There,  
In Iolcus," she cried, "do men keep troth,  
And respect the sanctity of an oath?"

For forget, and fame, or birds, will inform ;  
I shall appear, borne on the wings of storm.  
When thou least expectest it, thou shalt find  
The espoused maiden thou hadst left behind  
Come to remind thee of thy champion's wrong,  
Unbidden guest with curses on her tongue ! ”  
“ Lady, forbear ! ” he cried. “ Come as thou wilt,  
Thou shalt have no claim to charge me with guilt.  
All in Hellas will laud, even adore  
Her as Goddess, who brings them us once more.  
Thou shalt dress the couch in our bridal room,  
And love close our eyes on the day of doom ! ”

Her jealous passion softened in the glow  
Of fair form, fair words ; but the sun arched low  
Westwards. Both Jason and maids warned. Though  
fain

To linger, she parted, to meet again.  
Armed for combat he went. In still night air  
He bathed, and worshipped by light of the Bear.  
Next day to the King's perplexed rage he broke  
The bronze-hoofed bulls, fire-breathing, to the yoke ;  
Ploughed the fallow, careless of the hot breath,  
And sowed, broad-cast from him, the dragon's  
teeth.

Lastly, when the Earth-born sprang into life,  
Tricked them to mutual murderous strife,  
Till the Giant-crop, a half day from birth,  
Was returned by his sickle-sword to earth.

So, the ordeal ended. The Heroes led  
Jason, victor, back. Æetes in dread,  
Meditating yet how to keep the Fleece,  
Above all, from being resigned to Greece,

Re-entered his Palace. Never a shade  
Chilled him—treason in Her—his peerless Maid !  
Suspicion that She had disarmed each spell—  
Crushed him with his artillery from Hell !  
And She returned—to find half mad with grief  
Her Sister ; had Medea no relief,  
For cousins—brethren—from their Grandsire's wrath  
At their treason in standing in his path ?  
Medea was dumb, or deaf ; if she heard,  
Cared not to utter one comforting word.  
Seated at her bed's foot on a low stool,  
She felt her soul an eddying whirlpool.  
She leaned a wet cheek on one hand, but tears  
Eased not, were of the sort when each drop sears.  
Now it was an outrage, worse than no use,  
To make of love and beauty an excuse.  
Conscience rolled backwards, forwards the " ill  
deed "—  
Hers—in her Sire's House a poisonous weed !

## “THE SWALLOW! THE SWALLOW!”

Nature's appeal! Voiced by city urchins!  
Southern Spring's own sovereign summons! Bravado  
alternating with humility. “Everything — Any-  
thing!” Childhood intoxicated with the gay, flower-  
scented air. “Come forth all; dance and sing!”

And, withal, the pretty, musical Greek!

“Author?” We will hope, none; Earth-born,  
Air-born—Greek earth, Spring air!

## THE SWALLOW SONG

*Ignotus.*

Ho! the Swallow, the Swallow is here, and She  
brings  
From the South, and its sunshine, all beautiful  
things!

Hovering o'er glossy black back, or close pressed  
In joy and in love to her buff and white breast.  
See how the sisterhood of the fair Hours  
Before her can lay a carpet of flowers—  
How violet, primrose, myrtle and sallow  
Burst into bloom to welcome the Swallow!

Goodman, fling wide open the gate,  
Let not my Lady Swallow wait!  
Bustle! Bustle! where is the cake,  
That here they know so well to bake,  
And the wine?

Brimful beakers, please;

With a whole basketful of cheese.

Hungry and thirsty, and coming from far,  
Our Lady's not very particular;  
But white bread, or brown, be it crumb, be it  
crust,  
Spread a table for Her you will; and you must.  
"Go as we came, and take nothing away?"  
Her Ladyship does not put up with a Nay!



Good people, take heed ! You hardly guess what  
A spirit She has, the strong bill She has got ;  
She might peck off the lintel, or door's-self ; then  
where

To go in, or go out, with your door in the air ?

Or, stay : who's there sitting ? Why should we  
not take

The trim little housewife ? She's nicer than cake ;  
Our lady will tuck her tight under her wing ;  
Light weight for a Mistress who carries the Spring !

Says " she won't come " ? Well, hand out to us  
instead

A pancake, or bun, or a little pulled bread ;  
And a twelvemonth from now you'll be glad that  
you gave ;—

A penny's in kindness worth a pound that you save !  
To givers the gain ;

'Tis all one to the Swallow !

Open your doors to the Swallow, the Swallow !

Nobody keeps his door shut to the Swallow !

Merry urchins are we ; and why not you too ?

Just slip off your years, and come into our crew !

On, Swallow, on ; and, Boys, all, follow, follow !

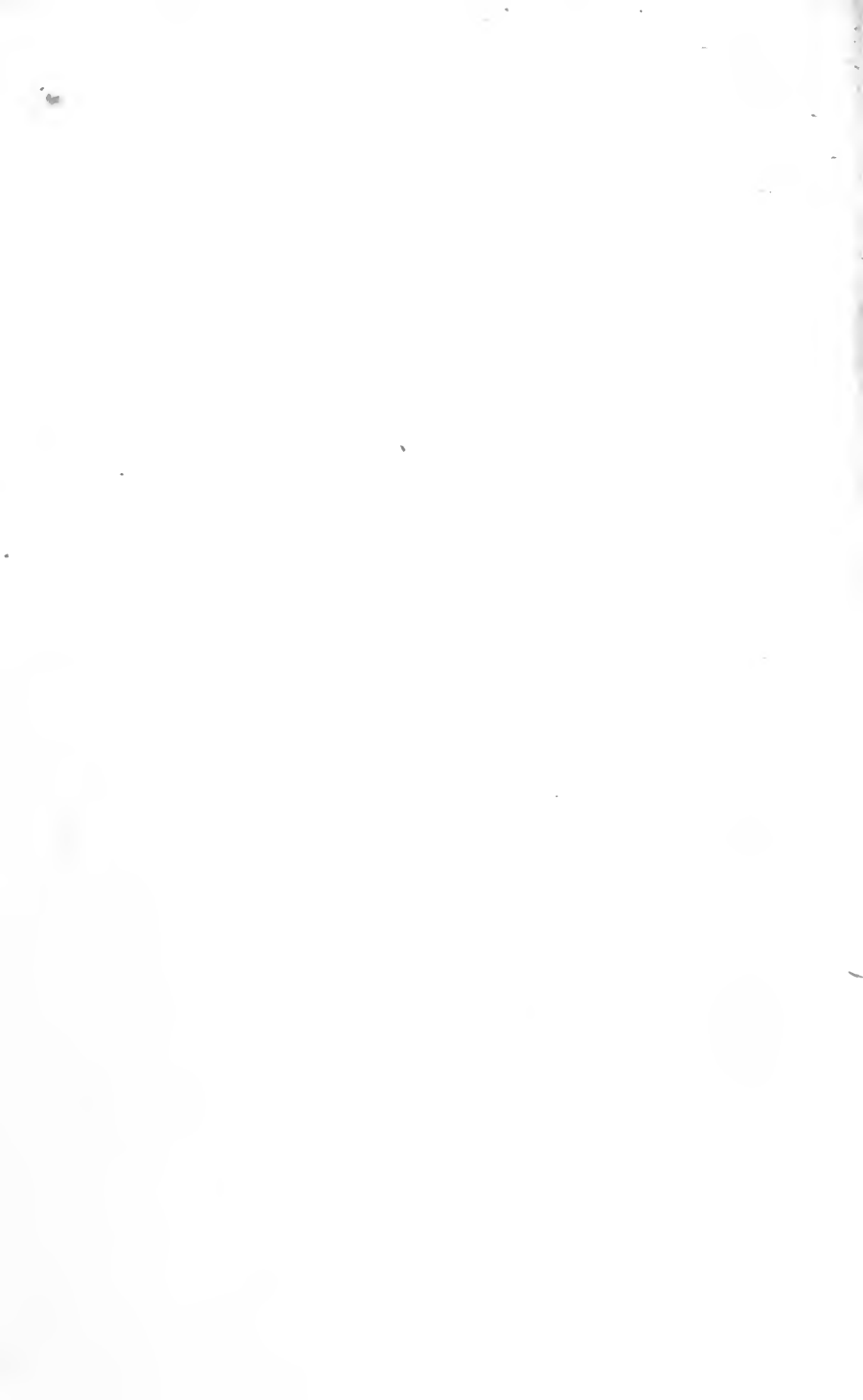
Hail to the Springtide ! Thrice hail to the Swallow !

*Printed in Great Britain by*

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED

WORKING AND LONDON









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